Wiltshire Essays

By

Maurice Hewlett

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WILTSHIRE ESSAYS

Essays by the same Writer

'IN A GREEN SHADE'

WILTSHIRE ESSAYS

BY

MAURICE HEWLETT

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PREFACE

On Oneself

I AM not able to conceive of anything, at first sight, more uninteresting than discourse upon such a subject, but if it can be done anywhere, where so well as in an essay; for what are essays but oneself written at length, oneself draped about some fortuitous peg? Where, then, better than in the preface to a volume of them? On the threshold of oneself what can more usefully engage the visitor than initiatory disquisition? A grace before self; for what one is about to receive! Moreover, as it so happens that in the course of the last thirty years I have done a variety of things and received upon them every variety of comment, except my own, it may be that the time has come for my contribution to be put in. I can raise some curious points; and a reviewer in the *New Statesman* of the other day (15th January, 1921) gives me the opportunity. Upon his peg then will I hang my egotistical drapery, and over those whom he designates will I cast my shoe.

In a review, extremely *simpatica*, and, as I please to believe, discerning, of a recent little book of mine, predecessor of these presents, heading straight for his principal affair, he

does me by the way the extra service which tempts me to this commentary. He observes that:

> 'Mr. Hewlett is still, for too many of the public, the enamoured troubadour of the Italian spring; it is not sufficiently recognised how he has developed and what striking proof he has given of his essential modernity in his great poem on the English peasant.'

I am obliged to him. He is right, and a permanent irritation of mine is much allayed by his observation. Notwithstanding that full five-and-twenty years have coursed over this frosted pow since I belauded the youth of Italy, notwithstanding that I have published seven volumes of poems, and scarcely a volume in prose which was not conceived as a poem is conceived, it is still the fact that six readers out of ten expect every new book of mine that reaches them to be more or less of an echo of *The Forest Lovers*. What am I to do? It imputes to me incredible stupidity, itself is incredibly stupid—and what can one do with stupidity except foam at the mouth? Somebody sent me a specimen of his prowess in that kind only the other day, a chuckle-headed 'K. K.' writing in I know not what journal. 'Admirers of Mr. Hewlett's graceful pen', he said—or words to that effect—'will be disappointed when they open *In a Green Shade* and find that it is not a swash-buckling romance. . . .' And so on. What are you to do? I don't think that I have ever swashed a buckler seriously, though when the sort of thing has lent itself to my humour I may have gone a part of the way with it, or even a little

further. But if I had, is one to swash them for ever, or are one's readers to expect it? Supposing I had done it, what could the end have been but that I should have yawned in my readers' faces, and had them yawning back? *Solvuntur tabulae—oscitatione.* I have been told, and believe, that a man changes the entire habit of his body periodically, in a term of years. May he not change that of his mind? Must he not, if he is to keep pace? I don't say that he should do it as often as Mr. Wells, who seems to change his opinions with his shirt; but in twenty-five or thirty years he should have shifted, or a man is a limpet.

To a reviewer of that calibre, whose brain, if brain he have, works in a groove of somebody else's trampling, or who, in default of brains, will use other men's thoughts ready-made, dabbing them down in blocks like draughts on a board, Mr. Hardy remains, and will for ever remain, a novelist. He has written poetry all his life; every so-called novel of his was conceived as a poet conceives things, written as a poet writes. No matter. He published 'novels' before he published verse. Therefore he is a novelist, and admirers of his graceful pen, when they opened *The Dynasts*, must have been disappointed to find that it was not a rustic romance. I quite believe it; but if they were such asses as to read K.K's reviews, what else could one expect?

On my own understanding of the matter I have not written a single novel. *Tom Jones* is a novel, *War and Peace* is a novel, *Vanity Fair* is a novel, *The Old Wives' Tale* is a novel, and a very good one, too. In those things, and in

things like those, observation begat a book; in my own things the book (that is, the idea in the book, which really is the book) procured the requisite observation. A poet, then, writes *a priori*, a novelist *a posteriori*. Having one's theme, unconsciously or not, everything necessary to its nourishment and ultimate truth goes its appointed and quite unconscious course—not only the requisite observation, but the requisite vesture too, the only possible style, that is, the only way in which the thing can be done. *The Forest Lovers*, if any one cares to know, began by my scribbling down in an idle moment the first sentence in the book, on my blotting-pad. I don't know why I did it—but I did it. There it remained, a single short sentence, for how long I don't recollect. But something had been going on within me between the date of that scrawl and the appointed day when I saw the evolution of the theme it had suggested set out clear before me, like a Jack's beanstalk. The thing was born, and any trouble there was after that was trouble of planning and detail. I remember that whole pages of it at a time used to come out of my pen in the early mornings, faster than I could write them down. In my experience a poem comes in exactly that way. The best poem I ever made, by far, built itself upon the broken cry of a poor girl, mortally hurt by war. A line (so given, or produced God knows how or why else) sets the theme. After a period of gestation, the thing is born whole, in outline. The detail comes unsought, *mero motu eius*, by degrees, but always whole and self-sufficient. The work, the only conscious work, is dove-

tailing the unsought fragments together, with the best you can do, with that at least which won't stultify the unsought. That, so far as I can speak, is how the thing becomes a trumpet, or a penny whistle, as the case may be.

And whether it was in the beginning, is now, or ever shall be any good, is not for me to say—luckily so, because I cannot. What is more, I don't think I care two straws, now. It all seems a long time ago, so long that I can only recall with an effort the tremendous importance I used to fasten on it all. But now—*cosa fatta capo ha.* It is done and done with. Now I shelter behind the *New Statesman*, to get out of the weather when my past is whirled about my present.

'Lord, what is man?' That is the cry when you are sixty.

There is little to add, though it may as well be said here as elsewhere. I call these chapters *Wiltshire Essays*, because they were all written in my county, and many of them are directly concerned with it. Some deal with the doings of my neighbours as I view them from here; some deal with literature as I think about it here. All of them have appeared in Reviews or Newspapers: The *Forum*, *Fortnightly*, *Nineteenth Century and After*, *London Mercury*, *Cornhill*; *Manchester Guardian* and *Daily Chronicle*; *Nation*, *Outlook*; I think that is a complete list of my obligations for hospitality *en route*.

After that, 'Go, lytel boke'.

Mascalls

WE cut out of the high road by a sunk lane between dogwood hedges and ragged elms, I and a young squire of my acquaintance who lives and reigns not far from here. Beyond the trees there showed up the gable-end and chimneys of a house, and anon we came to a flint-and-stone wall, a blank space of masonry, wherein one barred window. The place might have been a convent in some Tuscan *vicolo*, so blind a look it had; but in our country, when a little house faces the sun, it has no use for windows to the north. We reached a door in the wall, tumbled down a flight of steps, and stood, as it were, upon the shore of a lake of light, with nothing before us but sun-shot air, and across that radiant emptiness the further hills rolling away towards Somerset. Two great ilexes guard the entry, and make so dry a shelter that the angle of the wall with their covering serves as a wood-shed. A terrace-walk runs along the rim of the vale, from which the garden, enclosed in its white wall and red-tile coping, falls sharply down to the river. The wall ends there in a freakish gazebo overhanging the water, which once might have covered a boat-house, but now has a homelier use. Upon the terrace is Mascalls, the old stone house.

Mascalls has a quiet and seemly, plain face, much like that of some old labourer which has been bleached and scorched by the suns of fifty summers. It would be bald-looking, almost too severely to the purpose, but for one ample bow-window, the after-thought of some Mascall of the Regency. That was about the date at which it took its present shape,

for while the ashlar might be of any age, and no doubt had served a much older house, its windows were all sashed in the way of 1810 or so, and a line of billets had been set under the eaves when a tile roof took the place of thatch. But antiquity was below us and about us—a mullioned window to the cellar, a huge tithe barn close by, built in Pelasgian blocks. The front door, with a coquettish stuccoed pediment which reminded me somehow of Jane Austen, stood open; and there, bowing, appealing with her faded eyes, stood the wife of the last Mascall who could be suffered to hold Mascalls, a patient, sad-faced woman, rendered by cares rather than years to look any age. She made us free of the place with a courtesy which never fails her countrywomen, though one of us had decreed that morning that she must leave. We made our rueful survey. We saw the wreck of a sturdy old house. From attic to cellar the tale was the same. Parting walls, sagging ceilings, gaping floor-boards, dry-rotten joists, damp-eaten, rat-gnawed, it was falling about the family's heads. To put the place in order again would cost a small fortune in these days, which could only be recovered by rent. But rent was what the family could not find—so what were you to do? My friend was humane, but he had to pay his way. His land was not a luxury, it was his livelihood. He was in as mortgagee on a foreclosure. The word had been spoken. Mascall could no longer hold Mascalls.

Yet what a pleasant seat for an old house, on a ridge above the eddying chalk-stream, full in the sun, with a view over the valley into the heart of the West! What a shady orchard of cider-apples, what a sheltered, ripe old walled-garden, what a green water-meadow edging the brook!

The place is so much 'seated in the mean', as Shakespeare says; it has the homely comfort, the plainness, the gentle every-dayness which makes our country beloved of all who come to know it. A country of half-tones, of silver-greys and amber-yellows, of mild wet winds, misted mornings and temperate noons; a country of Quaker habit. To be driven from it, if you have lived there all your life, and laboured its earth, and gone out and in; brought your bride there, got your children there, seen your old father die and borne him thence to the churchyard, returning then to know that you are Mascall of Mascalls; as it was in the begining, is now . . . and then—to slip back and back, to feel your hold loosening, to be shiftless to help, in your own holding on sufferance, by squatter's right . . . and then—bidden to go! How can a man bear that?

There is neither script nor memory in the parish which does not recall a Mascall at Mascalls. The name there goes back to the fifteenth century; and if the house was called so then it can only have been because there was then a Mascall in it. And so you go back by allowable guess-work to the first Mascall of all. They were yeomen, free-holders, or as good, of belike a hundred acres; and if 1810 to 1820 saw the house refaced, new-roofed and made trim, you must reflect that those were great years for farming, with corn at 160*s.* and other things according. Then came lean years; then temperament crept in; the Mascall blood ran thin; the present man's grandfather failed, perhaps in the hungry Forties; he mortgaged, could not pay his interest; the squire's father foreclosed, and since then Mascall's father and Mascall himself have been labourers for hire. Even so they could not keep afloat. Mascall, an honest man, a steady, well-spoken man, but,

as I read him, a man with a temperament, lost way, could not pick it up again. The house began to fall. And one can't go on so for ever.

I can only guess what they feel about it, for, being what they are, both of them, they will not contend with fate. It is to be, they say, and wait for it to come. Unable either to do or to say anything, it is almost impossible to conceive lives so expressionless as theirs. Barely, you would think, a human life—except that they have loved, and had children, and worked. But something was wanting besides expression. They never leave their work, they never cease to work, and yet they can't get on. Year by year they have worked the daylight through, debt mounting, the old house falling flake by flake like a November woodland. Dock and thistle choke their tillage, mud and dill-cup and marsh-marigold choke their gutters. Not only have they never complained, they have done no hand's turn to stem the ruin. It would seem as if the round of every day absorbed all the vital force they have to spend, that any intervals from toil which they might win went in vacant reverie. Mascall, I was told, has been seen of a Sunday morning standing in the road, doing nothing. Simply standing there. Not leaning over a gate, not smoking a pipe; but standing, doing nothing. Whether any intervals come Mrs. Mascall's way I don't know, but I doubt it. I saw a photograph in the house of one of its daughters. A pretty girl in white muslin, a sash round her waist, a flapping straw hat in her hand. Fair, blue-eyed obviously, like her mother. A pretty girl, but—temperament was in that vacant smile.

And so—Mascall of Mascalls no more; and the old homestead must to it again.

Fifield Ashes

THERE'S a green road, which we call the Race Plain out here, running along the top of the hills from Harnham, close to Salisbury, to Whitesheet Hill. There, over Berwick St. James, it picks up the Shaftesbury road, of which once upon a time it formed a section. It was a coach road in those days, and for evidence of that there remains even yet, half-buried in the turf, a stone on which you may read, From Hyde Park Corner, 98 miles. Now its only wayfarers are the gypsy-folk, who use it habitually, and whose fires you may see all along its length wherever the furze affords them shelter from the wind. A hatchet-faced, bleak-eyed people they are, utterly alien from us, though using our speech and serving themselves of our weaknesses; very beautiful and free-moving when young, but soon beaten out of colour by the weather, bleached down to parchment, and dragged out of shape by the burdens they must bear if they are women, or the arts they follow if they are men. How truly bred they are by this time I don't know at all; but it is certain that the gypsy blood is strong and persistent; for though you will see fair-haired girls and boys among them, and fair-haired women too, I never yet saw one that showed not the quick, wild-animal, foreign look in the eyes, the hatchet-face, or the wheedling husky voice. They have powerful attraction for our young men, those girls of theirs, as they know very well, and use it for their occasions, which are not always honest. I confess myself to the attraction, though not a young man by any means.

Not far from where I live there is a spinney on the green road, which we call Fifield Ashes. Planted, no doubt, in the beginning by birds, it is now a wood of some pretension; the ashes which give it name are trees of sixty or more years; and there are sycamores, too, and dense undergrowth of dogwood and elder. It was there on a sad autumn dusk of cloud and rain drifting from the west that I saw the women whom I called the Fates—for such they looked. They had a fire on the lew edge of the wood, and sat about it, watching it sink. The tripod stood over it, the pot was not slung. The meal was done: they were settling down into the night, which was coming on swiftly. With the end of the fire their vigil, I thought, would be over. And what then?

The glowing logs lit up their faces and forms. I stood gazing. One was a very large woman, broad-browed, broad-shouldered, deep-breasted. She had a lap like a table, for her knees were raised and wide apart, and her white apron stretched across them like a table-cloth. Upon one knee she rested her elbow, over the other laid her left arm. She had an expressionless flat face, a Kalmuck face, with the high cheek-bones, squab nose and void, cavernous eyes of the type. Her hair was coal-black, braided and looped about her cheeks. The firelight caught and danced in a large gold ring hanging from her ear. She sat like a sphinx, motionless, staring into the fire. Beside her was a younger woman, in a flowered cotton gown, her head covered in a twisted red scarf. One of her knees was raised, and I saw a bare foot under her skirt. The sharp-chinned, tanned, true gypsy type, she was; and she, too, looked into the fire, her head drooped sideways to it, as if she pitied what she saw there. The third woman

sat apart, in a stuff gown—black bodice, red skirt—with a handkerchief wound in her hair. She had been pretty in her day, and was still a shapely figure with youthful curves. And what she read in the fire I couldn't make out; something which gave a sad twist to her mouth, but told her nothing which she had not expected. She watched it with no more than that interest you give to a tale of which you know all the turns, to a certain end. It was as if the tale was of her own making, so little did she show of curiosity, so much of sad acquaintance.

So, after some moments of watching in secret, I left them to their mystery at the falling of the night.

What were they thinking of, speechlessly brooding there over the dying fire? Think in your turn of what things they could think; of what they knew of earth-lore, beast-lore, and man-lore. Abroad in all weather, what could they not read in the face of the sky, in the trooping of the stars, in shapes and colours of clouds, their driving masses; in the shadows on the hills, in the volleying wind, under the glare of the sun? And of men and their ways, with each other and with women, had they not stuff to think of there? Brutality and bestiality, one and the other constant—how far does the squaw acquiesce? What is her judgment, with so little reason to think hopefully of men, and little enough of women either?

Mr. Hardy's fine poem has the wind of the green road blowing keenly through it.

From Wynyard's Gap the livelong day,
The livelong day,
We beat afoot the northward way
We had travelled times before;

The sun-blaze burning on our backs,
Our shoulders sticking to our packs,
By fosseway, fields, and turnpike tracks
We skirted sad Sedge-Moor.

The *Trampwoman's Tragedy* is a tragedy indeed, the more pitiful for turning on folly: fidelity of woman, hunger and rage of man, and vanity like an abscess between them. That is the curse of sex, that a by-blow of character can poison the wells of desire. But the trampwoman was not a gypsy, that is plain. The women of that race are faithful to the pact which allots them to the men who choose them. Borrow is right there. Ursula would go far, but not over the line. What the like of her would bear was written, I thought, in the inscrutable, sad, stoic faces of those three silent women at Fifield Ashes. Wherever their men may have been, on what nefarious commerce, had one of them come back he would have found his woman awaiting his pleasure, prepared for the pains to come. They are often incredibly burdened with their children, so much so that one can't believe there are any joys for them in motherhood. I remember a girl hawking brooms in the market-place one day, a child pouched in her shawl, one tugging at her gown, and another to come. I passed her again when market was done, shuffling out of the town towards the green road: the man walking alone and unburdened in front, she behind him with her triple load. She looked a child herself, yet had keen, gray, hunting eyes, and already the sharp lines on her face which the weather soon furrows there. A squaw, as often beaten as loved, and finding, it is likely, the one handling no better than the other. Yet she was faithful, and bore the triple load. In such races instinct takes the place of habit:

morals don't obtain. Strange that in the heart of England such a nation of folk should be.

As I grow old and watch life the closer, two things strike me dumb, as two others struck the philosopher. One is the blind blundering of men, the other the inexhaustible bounty of women.

The Great Affair

FANCY or superstition (and if they don't actually call cousins, who is to tell them apart?) led me to see on the Feast of St. Valentine evident signs that it was what we here believe it, the Birds' wedding-day. There are those, too, who hail it the beginning of Spring; and this year they had reason on their side. *It ver et Venus*.... The whole countryside lay, in Browning's jolly phrase, 'washed in the morning's water-gold'; the mild air streamed in from the west; the little brooks coursing over the warped meadows showed steel-blue. And the birds were full of business. I met a bullfinch, deeply involved, dressed to kill. The not impossible She was somewhere at hand, though I could not see her. The moorfowl were playing Pan and Syrinx in backwaters of the river, or through the watercress-beds; a starling whistled thoughtfully, with an eye upon my chimney-stacks; and the scattered clumps of moss below the barn-eaves were evidence that building was begun. But not the birds alone were upon the Great Affair, Nature's only affair, when all 's said. There were signs in the nutwalk, not to be mistaken, that the earth was astir—an artless display indeed, which must have enraptured Dr. Erasmus Darwin in his day, and would have titillated agreeably the Reverend Laurence Sterne if he had been up to it. This annual amorous preoccupation fills me with wonder and praise; it is one of those every-day miracles which seem much more miraculous than the most burning pages of the *Acta Sanctorum*. Duty and Delight

for once go handfasted. He (whatever his degree in the scale of creation) is bound to give, and She to take. Yet he is glorious over it, she sleek. It is a blissful commerce, worth waiting for, worth fighting for, and it happens once (or maybe twice) a year; and so it has been since earth took form and body; and so it will be until she lose them again. Is our life but a sleep and a forgetting? The birds won't say so. A birth and a begetting, according to them.

They say that in the invisible country, which few have had the chance to know so well as young Tamlane did, love is a seasonal affair, as it is with the birds; and I have a notion or a memory that Moses did his best to establish it so among his children of Israel. I don't think he succeeded—human nature beat him there,—but it is to be observed that to this day that notable nation takes life more nearly after bird-fashion than any one of the Gentiles. It is proliferous, philoprogenitive; the Great Affair still absorbs the women; and the men lend themselves to the tradition with the seriousness, or some of it, which they give to other objectives of theirs, making money, making music, or browbeating the uncovenanted. In a word, they are obedient to the Law. I wish I could think the same of our own nation, where the instinct, strong as it is, is easily diverted, where even pleasure is swallowed up in vanity, and the sanction is ignored because the duty is. Love has taken over the prerogatives of desire of increase; and of love vanity is first the humble servant, next the overbearing master. Now, therefore, it has come about that love itself cannot take itself seriously. Nothing matters but the looking-glass. What will happen when that has nothing interesting to report? God knows.

I suppose that Love's great usurpation took place here when the British developed the inordinate sentimentalism which still afflicts us. Broadly speaking, it was kept in its proper place in domestic life until the nineteenth century was thirty years old. You can almost date it by great Victoria. From the Pastons to Pepys, from Pepys to Walpole, from him to Jane Austen you may read how the British people made marriage in all walks of life. Liking, in the male, may have prompted the transaction, but it was strictly regulated by convenience and the real end of life. It was a matter of bargain, sometimes of bargain and sale. The instinct followed was the true one, desire of increase, not of possession of a person. Love as often as not followed marriage, springing as often as not from nearness and intimacy; or if it did not, use and wont took its place. I don't say it was ideal, but strongly maintain that it was less ruinous to domestic economy than our present custom, where lighthearted marriage involves lighthearted divorce. If people choose for love without increase, they flout Nature; and when it comes to a choice between flouting Nature or the Dean of St. Paul's, my vote is cast.

The people among whom my days are happily spent hold mainly by the ancient ways, saying (with my sincere agreement) that they are the best. You may think them, often, strangely insensible to personal attractiveness. Not from starlike eyes does the young peasant necessarily seek 'fuel to maintain his fires'. Unless he is afflicted with a *lues* his fires burn temperately. The pretty girls marry, but no faster than the homely ones; and if they are conscious of themselves, inclined for tribute, making to themselves looking-glasses of the young men, that which they receive is not that which they seek. Young men in these parts

may play the fool like young men in all parts, but not to the tune of marriage-bells. 'A sober woman and no highflyer,' old Pepys's desiderata for practical purposes, is also theirs. That she have in addition rosy cheek or coral lip seems to make no matter. Courtship may derive from walking-out, but quite as often supplants it. In the best families of my acquaintance walking-out, unchaperoned, is not allowed until the maid is one-and-twenty, an age supposed of discretion. And betrothal is a serious business which must be sought in all the forms.

It is not to be affirmed that love, even highly romantic love, may not exist among the peasantry. It exists among all the sons and daughters of men; but with us it rarely, of itself, leads to betrothal or is followed by marriage—except where the boundary has been overstepped. There and then, upon a decent man, that righting devolves which, as we hold, only marriage can give. Yet I have known a case where a passionate devotion has flamed in a girl's breast after betrothal, although the couple had grown up together from childhood without a thought of liking, and the marriage had been as good as made by the parents. In that case I should be ready to say that love flowed freely and gladly at the call of duty, for she was, above any that I have known, the truest to type, beautiful within and without, at once innocent and passionate. The man, however, was insensible and unresponsive. Unhappiness resulted. Such fate is the lot of women whose kindness is to them both a glory and a snare. That was an exceptional thing. A very distinguished and touching affection frequently follows upon marriage and the birth of children; of that there are shining examples all about me down here. Childless marriages, again, are rare, and

rarelier successes. The husband becomes estranged, takes to drink or to playing the trombone; the wife will be hysterical, as often as not—and so should I be.

Rare as are childless marriages, rarer still are desecrated marriages. You could almost count them in any rural deanery. The laws of being, as use has made and tradition hallowed them, still obtain. The men are monogamous, the women keepers of the hearth. Hestia is their goddess. And if our men have their god, his name is Terminus.

On Undressing in Public

WE are slow in the country to pronounce on what we hear, though it is a mistake on that account to assume that there is anything which we don't hear. There is very little; but mostly we hope that it may blow over, like a storm from the North-West. Our eyes may glitter; some one may say, 'Heard any one the like of that?' If we are young enough we may guffaw, and say 'Cor!' which is really an adjuration of the Cloud-Compeller. But we don't pass judgment; we revolve the news; we chew it like a cud. When we are ready we present the verdict of the Assize.

There has been a plague of self-exhibition lately which has run like a scurvy through the press. It is one of the many war-diseases. That great gash in the body-politic has provided a vent for our massed foul humours which seem likely to suffocate the world. Do we owe it, with so many other abominable things, to the Germans? They taught the *Morning Post* how to hate; they taught our army the uses of poison-gas. Now the memoir-writers have learned of the military, and we are being choked with secrets—secrets of the bower as well as of the Cabinet.

Whether Colonel Repington or Mrs. Asquith began it, I am sure I don't know; but now I come to think of it, I believe the prize for the first corker goes to Mr. Wilfrid Blunt. Luckily for us, and perhaps for him too, he simply emptied his enormous diary into the printing-press with a result so overwhelming that only a few hardy miners

have ever succeeded in piercing the spoil-tip he made of it. It doesn't matter how indiscreet you are if you are dull enough. You can do no mischief if you cannot be read. So Mr. Blunt doesn't count. Of the other two I have only read the Colonel's exhibit. That, which throws into the limelight the Colonel and his friends in their hours of ease and intimacy, is vivacious enough, to say no more, and I understand that Mrs. Asquith's knocks it, as they say, out of time. The pair of them share adjectives. They are called 'frank'—a press-euphemism well understood in the trade. One day, a few years hence, they will be in second-hand book-catalogues, and there marked 'Curious' in leaded type. That is another accepted phrase. Under that title you look for Tallemant des Réaux when you want him, as I did the other day.

We of the Quorum, at petty-sessions and elsewhere, know something about the itch to discover oneself which takes, very literally, that line of conduct. Lack of pence apart, I am not sure that any other urges the premature memoir-writer who is at the same time sincere. It accounts, surely, for Jean-Jacques, whose cerebration was as morbid as you please. On the other hand, it does not account for Casanova, who had the impudence to admire himself as a rogue, nor for Bubb Dodington, who wrote himself down knave without a suspicion of the fact. Bubb, however, did not publish in his own lifetime, nor, I believe, did Casanova. But vanity accounts for Casanova, and vanity needs be neither morbid nor vicious. As for money, the want of that will do almost anything; but it is safe to say that it won't lead to the publication of 'curious' revelations without either effrontery or arrogance to back it. It needs the two; for an arrogant man may know

shame. But effrontery which has a face of brass, and arrogance which says, I am outside the Law, those two in alliance will be all the backing which poverty can ask.

Arrogance and effrontery, singly or combined, might urge a man to undress himself in public; but he would hardly deal so with his friends unless they were like-minded with him. Out here we judge it to be the fact that, in a society whose memoirs make so uncommonly free, not only with the writers but with their intimates, a natural prerogative to do just as you please is assumed.

I had a tale the other day from a clerical friend who lives deeply in a woodland country. Six miles from his parish there is a lord's great house in a park; in which also, so close to it that it is like a wing to the house, stands a parish church. One Sunday in the summer, during Morning Service, the house-party assembled on the steps, not of the church, but of the house, turned on a gramophone, and had a singsong, so loud and so outrageous that the sacred office had to be stopped. Effrontery there, of course; but arrogance too: the behaviour of a great man who happened to be a cad; a man who despised the Church, liked the gramophone, and had never been brought up to see any reason why he should not do as he pleased. Well, there 's no harm in not going to church (at least, I hope not), and there 's no harm in liking the gramophone (at least, I suppose so); but there 's great harm to be done in annoying other people; and if you only annoy them enough—particularly when they begin to notice such things—the time is at hand when you will rue it.

It is reported down here, I don't know how truly, from Mrs. Asquith, that she and her young friends received

acquaintance of both sexes *dans la ruelle du lit.* That is mere Louis Treize, of course—and why not? On the other hand, why talk about it—unless you think it extraordinary? When you publish that kind of news, to people who have never read Tallemant des Réaux or heard of Louis XIII, first in a twopenny Sunday paper, then in a penny morning paper, next in a book about which the buzz-fly press settles in a swarm, you are guilty of a frivolity and an arrogance combined every whit as dangerous as that of the lord and his gramophone; because, just as he did, you are scraping and fretting into a raw one of the tenderest places upon the peasant-woman's conscience. And you will rue it. Next to public worship, which those who use it take with a painful sincerity, comes, in men and women of the country alike, personal modesty. To the men of a class which your arrogance has led you to ignore that is a matter of instinct. To the women it is of sacramental observance. It is only the unsexed or abandoned woman of that class who would show herself in bed. You will see the girls walk embraced on a Sunday afternoon; very rarely you may see them kissed—but only ceremonially. Intimacy induced by passion may, of course, go all lengths; but a good peasant, girl or woman, is modest to hysterical lengths. When I lived for a year or so in West Sussex I had a double bathing-house on the shore, so that mixed bathing could be had in comfort. I lent the use of it once to two young women who had been schoolmates. They went together; but I found that they had employed both houses. You may call that absurd, as I do. But you can't be revolted by it, as they are by the *ruelle du lit.*

I am talking here of the real peasants, who all read the newspapers now, and are therefore your judges upon that

vulgar assize. Don't imagine that you will emancipate them, or that they will learn of you. All that they will learn is that you are no better than you should be. That is the kind of thing which was happening in France—before 1789. Gouverneur Morris paid a visit—about 1780—to the Duc d'Orléans at Raincy, and went to Mass with the household. M. de Ségur and M. de Cubières 'amused the company by tricks with a candle, which is put into the pockets of various gentlemen while they are otherwise engaged. Immoderate laughter is the consequence. This scene', he goes on, 'must be edifying to the domestics who are opposite, and the villagers who worship below'. There again you have the lord and the gramophone. The edification of the villagers was shown in 1789–92.

It has been accurately observed that two classes of people in this country will always be themselves: the rich, because they don't care, the poor, because they don't dare, to be otherwise. It is the middle class which needs the respect of its neighbour, and can only keep its own by being sure of it. So to *épater le bourgeois* is an easy game—so easy as not to be worth while, unless, though born rich and become thereby an aristocrat, you are by origin bourgeois yourself; in which case you will no doubt relish the flavours. But—beware of the poor. They are now on the Assize. They read, and they judge, and their word for Arrogance is Impudence.

Mark on Sir Walter

IN Mark Twain's *Letters*, lately published here, you may see how, in writing to Mr. Brander Matthews, he lays out Sir Walter Scott. He takes off his coat to it, lands him a right and left, and knocks the Shirra out of time in about three rounds.

'Brander, I lie here dying, slowly dying, under the blight of Sir Walter. I have read the first volume of *Rob Roy*, and as far as Chapter XIX of *Guy Mannering*, and I can no longer hold my head up nor take any nourishment'—

And so on. You know his fighting style. It is pretty work, great sport; but it meant something. It meant that he was in a rage with what he took to be some outrageous bladder of pretence, put there for the old world to boast of, and therefore for him to punch. So he punched in a string of fighting letters, each more aggressive than the one before it. What he did not see, and never did or could see, was that with every punch at the enemy a repercussion flattened himself, and that when Sir Walter lay prone, far flatter than he and far more spent lay Mark Twain.

There is a tale, I think in *The Innocents Abroad*, where one of 'the unholiest gang that ever cavorted through Palestine' was shown a sacred flame which, he was told, had been burning for a thousand years. The cavorter was ready for that, as for most things. 'Well, I guess it 's out now,' he said. And it was. To us who are familiar with

ruined symbols (in a world littered with them) and the piety which first set them up, that is a disgustful tale; but it extinguishes the teller, as much as the lamp. To us it seems that you might as well flout the dead body of an old woman as the dead body of an old belief. What fun, on those terms, has not been made of the Bible? It is the *peculium* of the parodist. Now one may make fun of *Hamlet* to any extent; but it remains uncommonly difficult to produce anything better than *Hamlet*. In the letter which I have quoted there is a something at the end which shows that Mark himself had a suspicion. Walter Scott, he says,

> 'was great, in his day, and to his proper audience; and so was God in Jewish times, for that matter; but why should either of them rank high now? And *do* they? Honest, now, *do* they? Damn'd if I believe it.'

He may not have believed it, but he suspected it. Perhaps as he wrote his letter, he remembered that Homer did not cavort through the Troad, nor Milton through Eden, nor Dante through Hell and Heaven, and yet were great, even to him. But here's a singular thing in his next letter to Mr. Matthews:

> 'I finished *Guy Mannering*—that curious, curious book, with its mob of squalid shadows jabbering around a single flesh-and-blood being—Dinmont . . . finished it and took up *Quentin Durward*, and finished that. It was like leaving the dead to mingle with the living: it was like withdrawing from the infant class in the College of Journalists to sit under the lecturer in English Literature in Columbia University. I wonder who wrote *Quentin Durward*?'

I don't hold a brief for *Guy Mannering*. It is not a favourite of mine; but what under the sun did he find

in *Quentin Durward* which he could not have found there a thousand times better done? There 's the wind on the heath, there 's the sea, wild life, wild weather, and above all there are the gypsies. They make the book, they are the book. *Quentin Durward* is well enough; the young man himself is a real young man; the Balafré is a real fire-eater—but France is not there, the fifteenth century is not there. And how could he find Colonel Mannering 'squalid'? He could not. 'Squalid' is a punch. The Colonel may have been a 'walking-gentleman', but he was a gentleman; and a typical parent of the period. He is not at all more arbitrary than Sir Thomas Bertram, or Mr. Bennet. As an astrologer you might find him comic; but astrology itself is rather comic nowadays. Trust Jane Austen, however. She knows about it all. The type existed. Sir Walter was not far from it himself, highly-honoured parent though he was. Read his letters in Lockhart, to his son, a young Hussar in Dublin: 'These letters you will not fail to deliver'; 'you will keep careful accounts of your expenditure'. You will do this, do that—to a young man handsomely of age.

No—Mark Twain was in a rage, and like all men in such a passion, undiscerning. He lit upon some big bow-wow of Meg Merrilees', something of the Norna-of-the-Fitful-Head vein: 'My post must be high on yonder headland, where never stood human foot save mine—or I must sleep at the bottom of the unfathomable ocean, its white billows booming over my senseless corpse.' That is Ercles' vein, and the true Mrs. Siddons vein. It is difficult to read, but not more impossible than Corneille when you allow for the convention. If Mark had not been so cross he would have been the first to know that in

imaginative writing the fact 's the thing. If he himself had been a hunter for *le mot juste* he would not have chosen 'squalid' as a description of Colonel Mannering.

That easy line of attack, which would be equally deadly against Jane Austen and Charles Dickens, was adopted the other day by Mr. George Moore, who, in a published conversation with Mr. Gosse, tore into ribbons some such rhetoric from the Waverley Novels. What he did not choose to see, what Mark Twain probably was unable to see, was that while Scott's drama is hardly ever less than striking, hardly ever false to art or life, his language may be as conventional as you please. You will find speech as stilted and as insipid in *Tom Jones*, which Mr. Moore professed to admire. You will find ten times worse in Shakespeare. If you cut out everything but the conversational style in literature, what have you left in, after Chaucer? The inference, in Mr. Moore's criticism, obviously was that you had Mr. Moore left in; and I suspect that Mark Twain had something of the sort at the back of his mind. I am obliged to them, but——

I have lately read through a number of the Waverley Novels, as I do every year, never without local and temporary annoyance—the sort of annoyance I get from the Shakespearian clowning—but never, all the same, without loving Walter Scott. Lockhart says somewhere, very truly, that they all smell sweet. So they do. They smell of the country. And however ridiculous, preposterous, strained they may be, they deal with great things in a great way. 'How few friends one has', he says himself, 'whose faults are only ridiculous.' The only fault of these books is that they are occasionally absurd. They are the conceptions, and in the robes, of a noble-minded

man. And he can scale the heights. Diana Vernon might be a heroine of Shakespeare's. Jeanie Deans is beyond Shakespeare. Nicol Jarvie has Shakespearian quality. Jonathan Oldbuck is like a Don Quixote of the East Coast. After Shakespeare, Cervantes was Scott's master, for he invariably loved what he set out to chasten.

But what does it all come to? Why, to this, that if a writer is of noble mind, and can rise to the grand manner in his argument, you can stomach a deal of infinitely poor manner in the conduct of it. The fact is what life exacts and art has to give; the 'garment thou seest it by' is of less account. But let no one think that Scott cannot soar on his quill. There is an image in *The Pirate* which will wash out Norna's heroics. The Udaller is going down to the fishing, his guests after him:

> 'Without giving vent to observations which could not but be disagreeable to their host, they followed his stately step to the shore, as the herd of deer follows the leading stag, with all manner of respectful observance.'

That is Homeric, and Scott is often Homeric. Like Homer, he may be allowed to nod.

Our First, and Last

MOMENTOUS as they may be, I must own the theory and practice of Eugenics to be above my force. Nor would I knowingly engage in debate with a dignitary. But when my little learning jumps with his science, when the future of our nation hangs, according to the pair of us, in the balance, I feel free to enlarge upon the Lecture—*Eugenics and Religion*—recently uttered by the Dean of St. Paul's, though I shall decidedly leave Religion to him. The Dean, then, prophesying, says in effect, what I took leave myself to foreshadow in a recent little book, that we are going to be poor, poor as a nation and individually poor; and he goes on to say that unless the best of our race choose to embrace poverty, with the changed manner of life which that must inevitably compel, it must needs be that only the worst of the stock will survive. For, he says, whatever other classes may see fit to do, the degenerates will continue to bring forth. Thus—'we are breeding from the worst of our stocks'. If well-born people will not have families, well-born people will die out. Obviously he is right there. With that part of his subject, however, my essay had nothing to do, though I should not shirk discussion of it, if there were anything to discuss. Granting his hypothesis, the conclusion is indubitable. It is also a necessary inference from my own conclusion, which was that we are going to be poor, and that we shall be all the better for it.

The Dean says that we, who in 1914 were 'a going

concern', are now 'a gone concern'. I agree with him. He says that we must needs make default upon our obligations—that is, go into bankruptcy. I agree. If we fail to pay interest on our borrowings, war-stock will be worthless, and the middle class, which includes capitalists as well as *rentiers*, will be on the rocks. Then the country will empty itself, not only of the capitalists but of the artisans and mechanics who live upon their concerns. Side by side with that the organized attack on capital which has already begun will run on amain. Ownership, whether of land or of industry, will be crowded out. Between the devil and the deep sea the rich will be extinguished, those of them who have not earlier withdrawn themselves and their money to some more congenial soil. And what of those who stay behind? There will be no army, no navy, no manufactories, no great estates, no great farms. We shall become, as I predicted and as the Dean seems to infer, once more 'a small, hardy, fishing, and pastoral people'. One may add to that, pretty certainly, that we shall not be alone in our plight. All Europe may stand in with us.

Personally, I not only believe that, but (and there perhaps I part company with the Dean) look forward to it. My one regret is that I shall not be alive to see it. A Confederation of the size of ours will be a more unconscionable time a-dying than King Charles was. I remember once writing that if a little England was good enough for Queen Elizabeth and Sir Walter Raleigh it was good enough for me; but what is perhaps more to the purpose is to point out that, before the war, and I think also since, the smallest nations of Europe have held the highest proportion of happy and prosperous citizens: Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Switzerland. It is difficult also to see how it

can be, if poverty makes contentment for an individual, that it should not for a group of individuals, a nation. I, who was once rich and now am poor, seriously declare that I had not the gleam of a notion what contentment was until I became as I am. Happiness, to be sure, is more than contentment; happiness implies a striving, an activity, and an attainment, the reaching of a moral height. But I feel sure that if I am ever to be happy it will be when I have travelled the full logical length of my present road, see the height clear ahead, reach and touch it. To be rid of top-and-bottom hamper, to be self-sufficing, to stand square with other men, to avail nothing by what I have, but only and always by what I can—that is happiness, as I understand the matter. As for achievement, performance in terms of avoirdupois, that is relative. Build a Taj Mahal if you can, compose your *Iliad*; but don't expect a thrill the more than may the carver of a cherry-stone or the elegist of *Rose Aylmer*. If that is the considered view of a man, may it not come to be that of a nation of men?

Those who are likeminded with me, then, will stay where they are, among the ruins which the New Zealander is to gape at. If they do that, they will steer what is left of the State into some workable form of government. I don't think, with all proper respect for Mr. Bertrand Russell and Mr. Webb, that it will be either Socialist or Communist. Character is for ever Destiny. We are individualists in grain, and such I believe we shall always be. But I am digressing from a point to which I hope I have carried the Dean of St. Paul's. Now, however, I find him standing before the Eugenics Education Society with his indictment of our birth-rate in his hand. The well-born,

he says, will not have families for fear of being poorer; the low-born, degenerates, out-of-works, vicious, rickety, and feeble-minded will go on adding to the population. The result is race-suicide. I have now come to grips with him, and must point out a serious, unaccountable omission from his survey.

There is one class or nation of men, which he has lost sight of altogether, and that is the Peasantry. So long as that class can be contentedly settled here, with sons to marry and daughters to be married, there is no fear of degeneration. That brings me to a most curious conclusion; for that nation of men, which may be our last, was also our first. The Peasantry in this island has survived some two thousand years of servitude; and though it is now relatively small, it is not so small but that it can replenish our country. The probability is that it was always relatively small; the certainty that it has always replenished our country. The last ice-age may or may not have obliterated the palaeolithic men. Whether it did or not, it is a certainty that from first to last the indigene has suffered two things from invading nations: servitude for his males and mating for his females. Every successive invasion of Britain has left its mark upon the Peasantry; but the stock was never exterminated, the stock survives; and at this latest day the men of the County Regiments who outstood the attempted invasion of German hordes can trace their descent, through sire or dam, to the people who were here before Stonehenge was raised by Celtic colonists. I dare say it can be asserted of every country in Europe, west of the Adriatic, that its peasantry was the first of men there, and will be the last to go. They are, as it were, the very stonecrop, the flowers of the field.

The Dean deplores the approaching extinction of his own class. It will not be extinguished if it once more mates with the Peasantry.

Maxim Gorky is very much to the point here; or rather Tolstoi, whom he reports in a beautiful little book not long since published in translation by the Hogarth Press. Gorky says that he was walking one day with Tolstoi in the Yussopor Park, in Moscow:

> 'He spoke superbly about the customs of the Moscow aristocracy. A big Russian peasant woman was working on the flower-bed, bent at right angles, showing her ivory legs, shaking ten-pound breasts. He looked at her attentively.
>
> '"It is those caryatids who have kept all that magnificence and extravagance going. Not only by the labour of peasant men and women, not only by the taxes they pay, but in the literal sense by their blood. If the aristocracy had not from time to time mated with such horse-women as she, they would have died out long ago. It is impossible with impunity to waste one's strength, as the young men of my time did. But after sowing their wild oats, many married serf-girls and produced a good breed. In that way, too, the peasant's strength saved them. That strength is everywhere in place. Half the aristocracy always has to spend its strength on itself, and the other half to dilute itself with peasant blood, and thus diffuse the peasant blood a little. It's useful."'

Useful indeed. *Le mot n'est pas riche.* My knowledge of the Russian peasantry is got from reading; but that leads me to think that they will prove to be the salvation of Russia. So also I think that our peasant-girls may save Britain, and not alone in Tolstoi's meaning (which is very much the Dean's), but in my meaning too. For the

Peasants as a class, or a race if you please, are not only strong, but in the main are good. By that I mean that they observe the law of their being, which is more than can be said for the main of any other class in this country. The Quakers are neither a race nor a class, or they must certainly be reckoned observers of that law.

I know the country folk of the South and West intimately; and they are probably of straighter descent, with less foreign addition, than any others of us. Least of any have they the Danish or Norse element which, whatever virtues it may have added, has taken from them who have admitted it those good manners which they must once have shared with the West. The Peasantry of Northumberland I know; and them of the middle West. I lived in Kent as a boy, and in West Sussex only yesterday. I made good friends there with village people. Their faults are obvious, and most of them traceable to their long experience of wretchedness and oppression. Drinking, which used to be their standing vice, has died down markedly of late years, since abstinence was made an Eleventh Commandment by the Nonconformists. The best of the Peasantry are dissenters, and who dissents abstains. Drink, however, was never a vice of the women, who indeed have rather failings than vices. They rail, they scold, they gossip like the devil (but not like Colonel Repington); they grudge, they are jealous, suspicious, credulous, prone to believe the worse rather than the better; they will take your charity, as a matter of course, and rather wait for it than shift to help themselves. They are by no means more frivolous than the rest of their countrywomen, and, when married, much less so than any.

I think their worst failing is their kindness, let us say accessibility, to the men who court them; but that is a form of charity which I cannot bring myself to condemn, even while I know that nothing can be worse for the morale of the man who receives it, and nothing more certain than that she who bestows it will rue the day. 'Too much stiffness in refusing' can never be laid to peasant-girls, though, once married, infidelity is a blazing sin, excessively rare. But the statistics of illegitimacy are curious reading. Statistics will prove anything, and among other things those of illegitimacy prove, I think, as you would expect, that where the men drink most, and the housing is worst, there the girls get most into trouble. Cumberland stands by itself. The farmhands there 'live-in', as it is called; and mischief is bound to follow so surely as imagination dogs the heels of opportunity. In Norfolk, South Lincolnshire, and Dorset, the houses have been scandalous, and drinking is rife. Here in Wilts, where drinking is rare, incontinence is not one of our great troubles. A serious evil of village life throughout is the prevalence, at large, of feeble-minded girls and boys. Erotomania is the common symptom, and they are fatally fertile.

But for their virtues—let those of our village men stand as they are written in the history of the Four Years' War. Nobody will ask more of a man than was given by the County Regiments; yet there are other qualities, not perhaps called up by such a hateful business, which I should like to record; and one is their moderation, and another their decency of conversation. Nothing could be more untrue than the easy generalization of a young writer which I saw the other day, which remarked as a matter of course upon the obscene talk in village public-houses. It is

ridiculously untrue. I speak, of course, of grown men. And so with moderation, or, if you will, temperateness of outlook; and so, remarkably, with their sensibility to the feelings of other people. In the West of England few peasants are without that, and in Wilts, where good manners, you may say, are invariable, there is added, when it is needful, a repose and simplicity in address which makes conversation not only easy but delightful. That again is naturally not acquired until they are of settled estate. They develop late, and remain gawkish until five- or six-and-twenty. By then they are married, and parents, and will show you, as Sir Walter Scott said of one of them, 'all the good breeding which nature can teach'. They treat you as their superior, no doubt; whereby you know that you are nothing of the sort.

As for the girls, who grow up to be the faithful wives, punctual and devoted mothers which most of them prove, it is a marvel to me how in all the circumstance of their days and nights at home, with the knowledge of life which they cannot but have, they should preserve—as they do—their innocence of heart. When one of the commonest excitements of children is to see a pig killed, how comes it that they grow up to be humane, gentle, and pitiful? And how comes it that, with the decencies of life what they must needs be, lodged, situated as these girls are, they remain sweet-minded, clear-sighted, ignoring if not ignorant of evil? But so it is. That simplicity, it would seem, which leads them sometimes to love too kindly, saves them from the sour requital which is generally exacted from the fond. They suck their honesty at their mothers' breasts, they learn it at their knees. It is a part of their law,

The nest-law that says,
Stray not far beyond the hearth,
Keep truth always.
And then the law of sup and bite:
Work, that there may be some
For you who crowd the board this night,
And the one which is to come.

That law has never been digested. There is no code. Common law, it is got by rote by the village girl long before she marries and must teach it in her turn. Never deny Saint Use his canonization: he is the Patron of the Poor. If the Dean of St. Paul's fears, as he has said, that 'the tradition of culture and refined living will be maintained at the heavy price of family suicide', I recommend him to consider the family life of a decent peasant-woman in any village he cares to choose between Chichester and Penzance. What culture besides obedience to the laws of life, what refinement beyond wholesome vision and temperate habit he may desiderate I cannot tell. But so much he will find if he looks for it.

Exempli gratia: one young woman in particular I have in mind, a wife and a mother of children, herself of a family of five girls of her same quality. Not only is she beautiful, but she is also, I think, as entirely and naturally good as a woman can be. I mean that she so acts that her goodness seems innate and of her substance, though no doubt it is due to her training by an admirable mother, like her a peasant, daughter and wife of peasants. But so she really is, that it appears no effort to her to be good. It is not deliberate at all: it is the chastity of Artemis, not Athena's. Sorrow, trial, dangers of the unsavoury sort due to herding in poverty, have assailed her. Since her marriage she has been driven to see life, in the slums of towns, at its foulest;

but none of it has stained her radiance. She has passed through it, and is as simply, merely good as if she had spent her twenty-nine years in Eden. Little things often reveal large things. I had an instance of her indifference to the ugly under my own eyes the other day. It happened that she had been ill, and her mother had told me of it. I went to see her, made immediate arrangements for the care of her family, and took her off by train to stay here with my people, people of her own kind, who knew her and would be good to her. In the train I supplied her with picture-papers, to amuse a long, slow journey, in one of which, an expensive, shiny, vulgar thing, all actresses in déshabillé and peeresses at race-meetings, there was a full-length photograph of a saucy French chit dressed in literally nothing but a bow of black ribbon. (No—she had shoes on. I notice that however bare those ladies are they always wear shoes. There must be a reason for that.) Well, the thing was provocative, indecent, vulgar—all that you please; but it was at least striking. The bow was so very black, the lady so very white. My companion, when its turn came up, turned the pages of the thing, mildly interested in this and that. I know what people are with a picture-paper. Her thin hand—she had been very ill—turned the pages, and presently opened upon the more than nude, the expressive, quite impossible, she. It was as if she had come to blank paper, or small print. There was no pause for surprise or judgment. Her hand continued to turn. There was not a flicker of the eyelids. The thing wasn't there, it did not exist. Knowing what people are—so well: a dull journey, a picture-paper; that was a revelation.

Is she alone of her kind? Far from that. There are enough left who are ape-proof and goat-proof by instinct. But they are not love-proof. They know passion, both as wives and mothers. They are able for the heights. And they know the law—the law which women of my own class do not know: that is, the law of their being. And how they keep that law, in the face of what difficulty, in what hutches and hovels, in what proximity, in what squalor, through what monotony of dark and fetid air, and endlong work, those who know villages and villagers will know as well as I.

There is much to be done for them, and no money with which to do it; but if a remnant is to be saved, let it be the Peasantry. First to come, last to leave, of them, knowing what I am talking about, I have said thus much and could say more. There are dangers behind them which they have not been able to avoid, whose scars they still carry. There are dangers before them which will be still more difficult to deal with, because they attack the very citadel, while the former were at the outworks. These are the dangers of prosperity, those were of adversity. But I trust to two things: Use-and-Wont, which is older than Stonehenge by a great deal, and that moderation which always tells them, Sleep on it. That, indeed, is already working in the better sort. They know more about the reaction of high wages than the young ones. And weight will tell.

Misgivings about Labour

ORGANIZED Labour makes large demands all the world over, but in Great Britain, at least, made yet larger ones a year or so ago. At the last Election I remember thinking it possible that the next one might show a Labour majority in the House of Commons, and I told myself to be ready for it. If I am not of the same opinion now, it is because Labour is not of it either. I have no pretensions to political science, still less to political practice, and am so made that right theory seems to me to involve a conduct to correspond. That, I suppose, is only to say that I am an idealist *pur sang*. On broad principles, therefore, I was quite ready to see the persons who did the main of the country's work obtain their due share, whatever that might prove to be, in the country's ordering. If I must now add a proviso to that handsome view of things, and say that I am ready *when they are*, I must be allowed to observe that I add it less because I have changed than that they have changed themselves. I cannot now believe that they are ready to deal with a majority at a near election; nor can I believe that they will get one.

It is the fact that well-wishers, the benevolently disposed towards Labour, have been increasingly puzzled by its proceedings. It has seemed to me, who am neither prejudiced nor directly interested, to be going on the lines of showing to the electorate how a political party should not be formed. It professes Socialism, for instance, while its members are of all persons known to my observation the

most rootedly individualistic. It professes to be a Party, yet none of its parts cohere. It will not choose a leader for more than a session at a time; and even so, as often as not, those who have been chosen are not followed, are hooted down, called names, flouted or disregarded. The same thing is observable in Trade Unionism. There the so-called leaders are often, in fact, the driven. I suppose it was as plain to others as it was to me that in the latest Railway Strike Mr. Thomas did what he did because he saw that he must. And I cannot doubt that the colliers gave their leaders to understand what their course was to be. I know nothing more than what I read in the newspapers; and that was the impression I received. All that does not indue a party with the respect which that party must have which aspires to govern a State. It suggests that the party is less a party than a horde, that the horde may be composed of headstrong, light-hearted, irresponsible units. When Dr. Johnson was asked by a lady friend why he had defined a word in his Dictionary in a certain sense he replied 'Sheer ignorance, Madam'. That, the hand being on the heart, would probably be the explanation of some recent displays by organized Labour. Ignorance may be excused; but meantime it persists, and serious talk of Labour government is wasted talk.

There are other things to amend besides ignorance, and the chief of them, I think, is this. The Labour Party, to call it so, is not free. It is in a worse position than that of a delegate; it is taking hire. Its employers are the Trade Unions, who find, as I understand, all the funds of campaigning and subsistence, and, paying the piper, not unreasonably call the tune. If that is the true state of affairs, benevolence may survive it, but idealism cannot.

For the Trade Unions, obviously, are business organizations run in the interests of their members. Those interests ramify, and travel very wide, I know; nevertheless they remain the interests of the trade unionists. If then the trade unionists furnish the funds of the Labour Party, it can only be in order that the Labour Party may work for their interests, may represent them in Parliament as they desire to be represented, and may not, without permission, work, still less vote, against them. It is difficult to conceive of any relation between choosers and chosen more in the way of a political party with aspirations towards government than that relation. No conceivable political theory, other than the narrowest oligarchy, will fit in with it. I don't know whether the fact can be denied, but until it is denied I see no chance for a Labour Party. And it has to be remembered, as I found out the other day, that organized Labour is by no means the whole of Labour. It happened that I was speaking in Manchester before an audience in which there were many working people of both sexes. I had an appeal to make in favour of what seemed to me a duty of all reasonable, responsible, conscientious men and women, one which it lay eminently in the power of working people to undertake. I addressed myself, then, to organized Labour, not as a political but as a social force, and was sharply reminded by an objector that there was equally present in the country unorganized Labour whose duty might be equally involved in what I was urging. The answer was easy—Yes, but I can't get at *you*, whereas at the others I *can* get. The answer was easy, but the fact remains: the Trade Unions do not represent all Labour. The Labour Party, therefore, if I am right in supposing it sent to Westminster and maintained there by the Trade

Unions, does not represent even one section of the body politic, but only a section of a section. That reduces any claim it might have to the suffrages of the benevolent by at least one half, and probably, if the women are to be reckoned with (as they are), by a great deal more than half.

Those are some of the misgivings which non-party citizens like myself are troubled with just now. We see vices inherent in the Labour Party as it stands at this hour, in the party as a body of electors, in the party as a body of delegates. But there are others, no less serious, of which I must speak next. They are perhaps less vices than the absence of virtues—of virtues, however, which are indispensable in any vote-wielding citizen. There are, then, three senses which Labour seems to me conspicuously to lack, senses without which I don't see how a man is to be a responsible citizen at all, nor a party a responsible factor of government. Those senses are civic sense, common sense, and moral sense. Without those a man, *a fortiori* a party, is so much drift, swayed by washes of sentiment, surges of herd-instinct, at the mercy of the gales of clamour, rumour, panic, blind rage, fear, grudging, suspicion, dangerous to traffic in the fairway, and in danger himself. Those are serious charges, but the implications of them are seriously felt. I am not at all alone in my misgivings.

In case any working man should read what I am writing, I should like to repeat that I believe myself to be really disinterested, that I am neither master nor man, belong to no political party, and that if I have any ulterior motive it is that I may help as many people as possible to be as happy as possible. Lastly, to be done with myself, I ought to say that I am on intimate and friendly terms with a number of working men and women, village people who live by

labour on the land. I like them, and I think they like me. So far as they are working people, I know what I am talking about; and I don't mind saying at once that, as a class, through little fault of their own, they lack as much as any others the three senses which I have called the civic, the common, and the moral sense. What is more, the best of them know that they do, and deplore it.

The *civic sense* is obviously the consciousness of what one owes to one's nation, as a member of it; and its absence in Labour has been conspicuous in the last six years, ever since the state has been in real danger of collapse. No doubt it was wanting before, has always been wanting in a people so light-minded as our own; but circumstances have forced it upon the attention lately. I need not, surely, say that I am referring to the repeated and aggravated trade strikes which have endangered the country during and since the war. Perhaps the Police Strike was the most outrageous evidence of want of civic sense that has ever been given. If a policeman does not know what he is there for, who does? Suppose the clergy were to strike and excommunicate the faithful? Or the doctors? Yet has a policeman, has a railwayman, an electrician, a collier, no duty to the state of which he is a citizen? And is not, or may not, that duty be such as to over-ride his own hardships? In a time of national crisis is the state to be endangered because a railwayman gets less per week than a docker, or a docker less than somebody else? If you have no civic sense you will say so, and act according to what you conceive your rights to be. Your country is on the edge of bankruptcy, but you will hold up coal, or drive up freights, in order that, whatever be the result, you at any rate shall receive more pay. That is the line of the man with no glimmering of

civic sense. If, on the contrary, you have such a sense, it may well appear to you that your present duties outweigh your possible rights. Religion says so, but reason says so too. The civic sense goes further. It insists upon it. It may even say that in certain conjunctures you have no rights at all—only duties. Until you see that, you are not entitled to represent the state on the Government bench, either yourself or your delegate. The thing is so elementary that one is shy of stating it—yet how has Labour considered it in the last six years? Either not at all, or with eyes frankly fixed upon revolutionary practice. Nationalization of capital, of land, of industries, is held to be a justification for acts which endanger the state. Revolution may be a necessary resort in any state; but it cannot possibly be a resort while it remains an open question whether the state is to survive or collapse.

In nothing has the lack of common sense been so flagrantly displayed as in the great wages question; and the worst of that is that the intelligent in Labour circles know all about it, yet can do nothing to stop the everlasting cry for higher wages, and the inevitable rise in prices consequent upon every advance. And while prices rise correspondent with wages, almost in the same proportion employment drops. That is inevitable, and the patriarchs of industry know it very well; yet the clamour goes on. The Union thrives on the reputation it has for getting advances in wages. It gets them, men fall out of work, and land goes out of tillage. Where is the common sense? There is none. Still a greater folly, a heedlessness indeed which amounts to a crime, is shown in the excessive wages paid to lads and young unmarried men. That is a thing not only hurtful to the boys themselves and to the industry on which they

live, but it threatens the moral habit of the next generation. If our young people were by nature thrifty, if they were not of all the European peoples the most improvident, the least inclined to work, the quickest to stray after pleasure and the slowest to return from it, there might be less to say about the matter: but as their nature is, nothing could be worse than to overpay them. It is working serious mischief: the lads are set up above themselves, they give themselves airs, they won't be told. Their interests follow their money, to dances, to football, to cinemas, to motor excursions, to the tailor's. They lose hold of their science, lose touch with the soil, shake off the tradition of a thousand years. Once broken, it cannot be resumed; Saint Use's altar will be untended, and the finest class in England, the oldest, the steadiest, the best, will follow the others. Sheer ignorance, again; and sheer levity, too. I have said already that the peasantry, having survived ill-usage, have now a more potent enemy to meet. Prosperity is his name. I greatly fear that he will be too many for them, and certainly, if Labour does not help labourers, he will be. For Labour to help, it must somehow find common sense. That saving grace tells us, in its homely way, that a dog cannot live on his own tail. But if prices are to rise with wages, and employment to fall; if the young men are to go to seed, and raise up marrowless offspring—what else is the dog trying to do? Here again are elementary considerations; yet if the elements are being trifled with, how can one help raising them? Working people are acting like children and claiming to be considered as men. The sum won't add up.

I have not yet seen any answer from Labour to a letter written by Mr. Geoffrey Drage to *The Times* the other day, in which he pointed out that twenty-eight millions of people

in this country were subsidized by the remaining twelve millions. The moral sense in the recipients of such bounty is very inconspicuous at least. Whether you call the subsidy alms or tribute, it is not to a man's credit that he lives upon it. It makes him either a pauper or a blackmailer, neither of them a respectable employment. But Labour takes it as a matter of course, from old-age pensions provided by the taxpayers, to houses which cost £1000 to build and are worth a bare £300 directly the roof is on. A moral sense would tell a man that he would be the better for contributing to these provided necessaries; a civic sense would tell him that the state also would be the better; common sense would tell him that if he did not contribute, the time would come—must come—when he would not get them. But Labour shows none of these senses, and allows hand-to-mouth existence to go on. Indeed, it does more, for it suggests further subsidies, and claims them as a right. Mr. Clynes, the most considerable figure in the Labour Party, a man of principle and courage, has been speaking lately about 'the right to work', demanding either provided employment at the cost of the state, or out-of-work subsistence at something like forty shillings a week. Has his moral sense gone to sleep, that he thinks any man would be the better for such doles? And by what practicable check does he expect to ensure that a man who is paid forty shillings a week for being out of work will cease to take it when work is open to him? With the best will in the world I cannot see that the 'right to work', which everybody is born with, can be stretched to mean a right to have work made for him. No such 'right' can inhere; nor can it be beneficial to the state to provide or to the employee to serve a work not economically sound. Insurance against

loss of work is the only reasonable thing, just as insurance for old-age pensions would have been a saving of money to the state and of self-respect to the insured. But Labour lacks the moral sense as clearly, to my mind, as it lacks the two other senses.

I have one more grief to impart, and I have done. One cannot deal with the moral sense, and the lack of it just now in the Labour Party, without referring to the proposals for the employment of discharged soldiers, and the way in which Trade Unions have received them. The bricklayers stand out against what is called *dilution*; and with hardly any disclaimer allow the explanation of their conduct to be the fear of sharing wages with fellow-countrymen. Really, it comes to that. Building at the taxpayer's expense is going on all over the country. The houses are needed; they can never pay for their erection; they will cost £1000 and be worth £300 apiece. Their provision, therefore, is another of the subsidies to Labour which vex Mr. Drage. Nevertheless the Bricklayers' Union will not admit new hands into their mystery—for the reason stated. Does that show a moral sense? Does it show a civic sense? Or any kind of sense? What hope can there be for a political party framed out of material of that sort? But enough.

These are elementary matters—elementary, but also fundamental—which puzzle every friend of working people, except perhaps Mr. Sidney Webb. No, there is Mr. G. D. H. Cole, a younger and a darker horse. Mr. Cole, whose peculiar talent is for stating extraordinary propositions as if they were ordinary ones, may or may not be puzzled. He gives no signs of it, and perhaps it does not matter. But Mr. Webb, I think, is not puzzled. Like an albatross, he sails in an upper air of high and rare theory, scarcely

moving his great vans. He is well out of range of my blunderbuss. But these things, as Homer says, 'are a care' to me, and I wish he would descend and walk this distracted earth. How is Labour, I won't say to govern, but even to claim to govern, wanting, in the general and the particular, civic, common, and moral sense? 'He knows about it all, he knows, he knows!' I wish that he would tell us.

Clare's Derivations

AN excellent article on Clare's Manuscripts in a Review of July, 1920 has been followed by a valuable selection from them.[1] It is now possible to learn what sort of a poet this peasant, son of peasants, was. I emphasize his degree in life because, to the best of my knowledge, he is the only genuine peasant-poet we have. He was not only the son of a farm-labourer, but brought up to the calling himself, with all the hindrance to the ripening of genius which such an upbringing involves, and for the whole of his life at liberty, whenever he was not trying to live by poetry he was making shift to do so by farm labour. That sets him apart from such a man as Robert Bloomfield, as the quality of his verse does also. Bloomfield was a bad poet, Clare was a good one; but Bloomfield at twelve years old was apprenticed to a shoemaker in London, and seems never to have lived in the country again. It sets him apart also from Mr. Hardy, who may have been of peasant origin, but scarcely served the ordinary calling of his class, and received an education which rapidly trained him, and fostered, not impeded, his genius. Clare's schooling was of the scantiest, his life days were never prosperous, his work was exhausting, his lodging as poor as you please. Yet he became the lion of a season; his first volume went into three editions in

[1] Poems, chiefly from MSS., edited by Edmund Blunden and Alan Porter. Cobden-Sanderson, 1920.

a year; he was patronized by peers, met and was familiar with Lamb and Hazlitt, Haydon, and probably Keats. He was able somehow to collect books about him, and to read at large. The editors of the new Selection tell us he 'reverenced' Keats, that he admired Wordsworth, was critical of Scott. He must then have read Coleridge and Byron, perhaps even Shelley. There are indeed signs that he had read much. And from his reading, as may be guessed, he derived much.

But he had tunes of his own to sing, and was rarely an echo of other men. Here, from his early period, which the editors put at before 1824, is the opening of a ballad, which is like nobody else:

A faithless shepherd courted me,
He stole away my liberty.
When my poor heart was strange to men,
He came and smiled and took it then.

When my apron would hang low,
Me he sought through frost and snow.
When it puckered up with shame,
And I sought him, he never came.

If I don't mistake the matter, that is the peasant vocal of his tribe. And so is the song which follows it:

Mary, leave thy lowly cot
When thy thickest jobs are done;
When thy friends will miss thee not,
Mary, to the pastures run.

But how far Clare was indeed that rare creature, a peasant articulate, can be seen best in 'The Flitting', a poem which shows his love of his birthplace fast like roots in the soil.

As a tree might cry when torn from the bank, so the peasant cries in his heart; and so cried Clare in his verse:

> I've left my own old home of homes,
> Green fields and every pleasant place;
> The summer like a stranger comes,
> I pause and hardly know her face.

He was moving from a hovel to a house found for him by Lord Milton; as his editors say, 'Out of a small and crowded cottage in a village street to a roomy, romantic farm-house standing in its own grounds.' Yes, but he was rooted in Helpston, and must be dragged out.

> I lean upon the window-sill,
> The trees and summer happy seem;
> Green, sunny green they shine, but still
> My heart goes far away to dream
> Of happiness, and thoughts arise
> With home-bred pictures many a one,
> Green lanes that shut out burning skies
> And old crookt stiles to rest upon.

'Nos patriae fines, et dulcia linquimus arva!' There speaks the peasant.

'The Flitting' is a good poem, and very near to the bone; but Clare's particular excellence—that of close description—does not shine in it, and may have been dulled by his tears. 'Summer Evening' shows him at his best, a longish lyric in rhymed couplets of eight, interspersed with lines of seven, which may have been inspired by speeches in *Comus*, or by *L'Allegro*—as I think probable—but possesses what those works have not, an eye on the object without losing an ear upon the tune:

The sinking sun is taking leave,
And sweetly gilds the edge of eve,
While huddling clouds of purple dye
Gloomy hang the Western sky.[1]
Crows crowd croaking overhead,
Hastening to the woods to bed.
Cooing sits the lonely dove,
Calling home her absent love.
With 'Kirchup! Kirchup!' 'mong the wheats
Partridge distant partridge greets. . . .

and so on: a catalogue, if you will; but how closely observed, how fresh and happy!

Here he gets closer still: the plough-horse—

Eager blundering from the plough,
Wants no whip to drive him now;
At the stable-door he stands,
Looking round for friendly hands
To loose the door its fastening pin,
And let him with his corn begin. . . .

The geese:

From the rest, a blest release,
Gabbling home, the quarrelling geese
Seek their warm straw-littered shed,
And waddling, prate away to bed. . . .

Excellent. He runs thus through the farmyard, down to the very cat at the door, the sparrows in the eaves, and the boys below waiting till they tuck themselves in.

As he settled into his stride he grew stronger and better along his first line of minute observation and accurate phrasing. Best sign of any, he threw his description into

[1] Unless I hugely mistake, the *Shropshire Lad* has a reminiscence of these lines.

his verbs. Take his so-called sonnet, 'Signs of Winter', and mark the verbs in it:

> The cat runs races with her tail. The dog
> Leaps o'er the orchard hedge and *knarls* the grass.
> The swine run round, and grunt, and play with straw,
> Snatching out hasty mouthfuls from the stack.
> Sudden upon the elm tree *tops* the crow,
> Unceremonious visit pays and croaks,
> Then *swops* away. From mossy barn the owl
> *Bobs* hasty out. . . .

Not one of those but does its work. 'Knarl', as used in Northamptonshire, has the meaning of querulous complaint: its use here is onomatopœic, probably from 'gnaw'. 'Swops away' is Northamptonshire dialect for 'swoops'.

Here are some more verbs, beautifully used:

> The nuthatch *noises* loud in wood and wild,
> Like women turning *skreeking* to a child.
> The schoolboy hears and brushes thro' the trees,
> And runs about till *drabbled* to the knees.
> The old hawk *winnows* round the old crow's nest. . .

Wrens, according to Clare, 'chitter', peewits 'flop' in flight; the woodpecker 'bounces,' and

> Holloas as he buzzes by, 'Kew kew'.

But I had intended to write about his derivations, and will turn to them now.

Oddly, perhaps, he did not begin with Thomson's *Seasons*, as Bloomfield did, to his undoing, because he never left it as long as he went on writing. The vague idyllism, the obviousness and persistent generality of Thomson, are not to be found in Clare. On the other hand, in his 1820 volume, you have Burns:

Ay, little Larky! what 's the reason,
Singing thus in winter season?
Nothing, surely, can be pleasing
To make thee sing;
For I see nought but cold and freezing,
And feel its sting.

That is rather feeble, and though it improves as it goes on, never for a moment catches the unapproachable sauciness and raciness combined of its original. Clare had very little humour—which that stanza demands.

He imitates Crabbe freely—in poems like 'The Gypsies' and 'The Parish: a Satire'—but lacks the antithesis of Crabbe, and the sententiousness too. Crabbe must always be moralizing. Clare, like a true peasant, is a fatalist to the core. Let things be as they may, because they needs must. That is the philosophy of the peasant—Sancho Panza's philosophy. One of his boldest derivations is from the lovely 'Ode to Evening' of Collins. Clare's is addressed to 'Autumn':

Sweet vision, with the wild dishevelled hair,
And raiment shadowy of each wind's embrace,
Fain would I win thine harp
To one accordant theme;
Now not inaptly craved, communing thus,
Beneath the curdled arms of this stunt oak,
While pillowed in the grass,
We fondly ruminate
O'er the disordered scenes of woods and fields,
Ploughed lands, thin-travelled with half-hungry sheep,
Pastures tracked deep with cows,
Where small birds seek for seeds. . . .

The voice is the voice of Collins, but the eye is Clare's.

I have spoken of his verbs. Certainly he did not get those from Collins. Observe them here:

> See! from the *rustling* scythe the *haunted* hare
> Scampers circuitous, with *startled* ears
> Prickt up, then squat, as by
> She *brushes* to the woods.

And once more:

> And now the *bickering* storm, with sudden start,
> In *flirting* fits of anger *carps* aloud,
> Thee urging to thine end,
> Sore wept by troubled skies.

I suspect that distich to be fruit of Clare's 'reverence' for Keats.

There are traces of Wordsworth, as in the following 'Impromptu':

> 'Where art thou wandering, little child?'
> I said to one I met to-day.
> She pushed her bonnet up and smiled,
> 'I'm going upon the green to play.
> Folks tell me that the May's in flower,
> That cowslip-peeps are fit to pull,
> And I've got leave to spend an hour
> To get this little basket full!' . . .

and there are others to be found; but he did not apprehend anything more than the wrappings of the great poet, did not touch his sudden and starry magic—those chance gleams of unearthly light, unearthly insight which, in Wordsworth, make us catch our breath. But there was another Wordsworth who could make Dutch pictures, from whom Clare could more happily borrow. I think he gets near to that one in 'The Wood-cutter's Night Song', which begins:

Welcome, red and roundy sun,
Dropping lowly in the west;
Now my hard day's work is done,
I'm as happy as the best. . . .

and ends:

Joyful are the thoughts of home,
Now I'm ready for my chair,
So, till morrow-morning's come,
Bill and mittens, lie ye there!

The whole is a sweet and happy fireside picture.

The most curious derivation remains, rather more than a derivation. The editors print (or, in this case, reprint) a ballad called 'The Maid of Ocram, or Lord Gregory', which at first blush is not only remarkable as a poem, but even more so as an imitation of a real folk-ballad. It imitates not more the garb than the spirit of that beautiful thing. This is the opening verse:

Fair was the maid of Ocram
And shining like the sun,
Ere her bower key was turned on two
Where bride bed lay for none.

If that is not a terse and graphic opening, I don't know one. Then the tale begins.

Now it is proper to say here that the tale is exactly the subject of a ballad called 'The Lass of Roch Royall', published for the first time in Child's great book 'from a manuscript of the first half of the eighteenth century'. It is there called 'Fair Isabell of Roch Royall'; but there is a variant, 'The Lass of Ocram', which derived itself in turn from an Irish version called 'The Lass of Aughrim'. That is only half the story. Where did Clare find the poem which, until it was printed in the

Roxburghe Ballads, only existed in the British Museum? There can be little doubt of the answer. When he was a boy, cow-tending on Helpston Common, his present editors tell us, 'he made friends with a curious old lady called Granny Baines, who taught him old songs and ballads'. That is the answer; but other questions arise. What did Clare do with 'The Lass of Ocram' when he had it? The quatrain just quoted, at any rate, is not in it. It will be found also that he has added an ending. The tale shortly is that the lass was betrayed by Lord Gregory, and found herself with child and forsaken. She went to plead with her lover, who was asleep. His mother answered for him and denied her the entry, failing proof. Three 'tokens' are demanded, which the lass supplies. Finally, the mother drives her away, and at her despairing cry Lord Gregory wakes. He has dreamed of the lass, and questions his mother:

> Lie still, my dearest son,
> And take thy sweet rest;
> It is not half an hour ago
> The maid passed this place.

The ballad ends with Lord Gregory's remorse and lamentation. Clare, after his masterly opening, plunges into the tale:

> And late at night she sought her love;
> The snow slept on her skin:
> Get up, she cried, thou false young man,
> And let thy true love in.

That is new, except for the matter of the second line, which Clare has lifted and, I think, not improved. The original has:

It rains upon my yellow locks,
And the dew falls on my skin.

He uses that also, but, since he was bothered by the snow which he had invented, is forced to change it for:

The wind disturbs my yellow locks,
The snow sleeps on my skin.

In the revelation of the tokens he is not so simple as the ballad, but his additions are to the good. The second token:

O know you not, O know you not
'Twas in my father's park,
You led me out a mile too far,
And courted in the dark.

That is both original, and observed—from many a rustic wooing. The third token was the betrayal, where, as he cannot possibly better his model, he wisely conveys it. The ending, which is Clare's own, is artless and rather comic:

And then he took and burnt his will
Before his mother's face,
And tore his patents all in two,
While tears fell down apace.

Finally, 'He laid him on the bed, And ne'er got up again.'

While we may be satisfied how much of 'The Maid of Ocram' is Clare's, we shall never know how much was Granny Baines's. That is one of the secrets of folk-song which is insoluble. The 'rain upon her yellow hair', 'the dew sleeping on her skin', are beautiful additions of some unknown English minstrel to 'The Lass of Roch Royall'. A close collation of the two would be interesting,

if not fruitful. Clare's 'lay-out' of the tragedy, in his two opening octaves, is his only serious contribution. I do not find that he did anything else of the kind. He has plenty of narrative, but no other dramatic narrative, and of his many tales in verse none approaches this one either for terseness or the real ballad touch of magic.

The present editors have done a real service to literature as well as to Clare's memory by their new Selection; and it may be that they are not at the end of their discoveries. By what they have put forward so far they have shown Clare to be a considerable poet, more considerable than we could possibly have supposed by the work published in his lifetime. It is very much to me that the peasantry should have produced a poet of such power and charm, who interprets so faithfully the life of a race so old upon our earth, and so close to it.

The Collied Night

THAT is a good term for a country night, lifted of course from Shakespeare, who has a good term for every thing. 'Brief as the lightning in the collied night' Lysander says in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Colley means no more than soot. After his habit he made a verb of it: the collied night is therefore the sooted night; but to me it gives more than that. It gives the envelopment of the world, as with some muffling, histling stuff, by the vast and permeating web of soft dark. A dark which can be felt, and a silence which can be heard, softer than, but as permanent as, the sea-sound in a shell. I lie much awake, unfortunately, and can hear the night-stuff whispering thickly all round me. It mutes all the noises of men and their parasites and toys—their carts and motor-cycles and lorries, their dogs and padding nags; but not their cats, nor their cockerels. These remain, for all our tyranny, wild creatures; and wild creatures alone, I find, have the power to rend the collied night.

There are, to wit, three sorts of owls which break through the stillness like menaces. One shudders as he quests; one shrills a hoarse whistle; another sort yaps like a pack of young beagles. The first only says 'Tu-whit tu-whoo': he is the white owl. The second makes me think of witches homing from a sabbath, spurring the air and racing their broomsticks; the third, I don't know why, always reminds me of something in the *Inferno*. This kind barks by day also with a ventriloquial power which leads

you to think them where they are not. I know them well. They are very small owls, and live on beetles in the summer. Even more startling in the way their pipe can stab the night, are the water birds—dab-chicks or moorhens, I don't know which. Unless they are picking about on dry land they are at least two hundred yards from where I lie; yet they sound directly under the window. Theirs is a call which, once you have heard it, you wait for.

And so I do; and as I wait I speculate upon the beasts busy out there in the secret garden. One never hears a sound from them: mystery is their affair. Yet one knows that they are there—field-mice eating crocuses, confound them, and owls, luckily for me, eating field-mice; otters rippling like snakes among the reeds, questing from pond to river and river to pond; hedgehogs bustling in the shrubberies, moles for once in the open; cats at their cruel love-making; a fox trotting over the meadow by a short cut instead of stealing up a dry ditch; a little way off badgers nosing in a rooty bank. It is exciting to think of all these creatures so noiseless and so busy—but they don't last for ever, and the hours creep on. Some people count imaginary sheep bundling through a gap, but that's quite as much of a bore as counting real ones would be, and I never applied myself to it. Limericks are better. I once began a series upon all the stations on the South Western Railway:

> There was an old person of Exeter
> Who hated his cook and threw bricks at her . . .

but that is as far as I have gone. Or you can make speeches, address the assembled League of Nations at Geneva, or a Congress of Zionists at Jaffa, and have

a row with Mr. Zangwill. I have tried those things, and become so burningly eloquent as to make my head feel incandescent. I was afraid I had set fire to the pillow—and anyhow it didn't send me to sleep. Then I set myself a problem, to this effect. A few days ago the Mayor of Salisbury, to whom the War Memorial of his city was a care, plotted out a measured hundred yards of a street called Blue Boar Row with four parallels of white from end to end. He next invited the citizens to place half-crowns on the lines, touching each other, in the fond belief that at the end of market day he would find four parallels of touching half-crowns along Blue Boar Row. Four times a hundred is four hundred—four hundred yards of half-crowns—you follow? I hope he did find them, but as for the calculation, I shortly decided that it was far better to lie awake and think of nothing but the weariness of it than give my brain such a task. A peculiarly painful affection, which I can only call swelled head, ensues on exercises like that; and one should beware even of entrance upon them, because it is far easier to start thinking of them than to leave off. You can rub out written arithmetic, not mental.

At this point, if you are lucky, you doze, and when you awake there are signs that human beings are abroad again. Never do you so love your kind. You hear the carter chumping down the street and know it is past four. Or the milk lorry plowing through the wet, and the fritter of the water from between its double wheels. That is six. One hour to daylight, one hour and a half to tea and the post. I have a pet position for legs and hands for that hour and a half. I never use it, whatever the temptation, for any other. The legs must be bent at a right angle, the hands

folded prayerwise between the knees. Then, if it be not a day chosen by the man of God for church at seven, you may—It hardly ever fails.

Some read in bed, I know, but I never do. I suppose I have never tried a dull enough book. But a dull book makes me cross; and if you are cross you cannot sleep. Nor can you if you are happy in your book. So what on earth are you to do? I have had Mr. Lucas's works recommended to my bedside, but have never received them there. No, I think it is better to shut one's eyes and slog through with it. A last tip is to ask oneself why the devil the eyes must be shut when you are not asleep, and to try to keep them open. That has come off sometimes. There's a snag in it though. You find them shutting in spite of yourself—but shutting upwards like a chicken's, rolling up to meet the descending eyelid, instead of rolling down before its advance. Awful. If that happens, there's nothing for it but a lighted candle and a cigarette.

Doors

'WHEN I had been in London a year or two,' a friend of mine wrote the other day, *à propos de bottes*, 'and the place, with its hordes, was become less strange and less formidable to me, I began to discover it for myself. Gradually the towering cliffs resolved themselves into houses, and the houses into shrouded holds, each with a character and each hiding a mystery. Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came! I knew one from the other by sight. I read through the shut doors. I saw through the blank windows. Not a house upon my daily road but held a drama or promised a tragedy . . .' and so on.

I quote him because he gives me the clue to an essential distinction between town and country, town life and country life, which is that in the one all the doors are shut, in the other all are open.

That little fact in itself explains much; it is also true that something is needed to account for it. It drapes, at once, the town in mystery; it makes of it *li biau disconnus*; it provides a large measure of the attraction which it has always had for our village young men and women. They go up, gape about, drift from street to street among all those blank, blind, dumb house-fronts—shut doors, with grim knockers; sometimes a whole crop of little bells running up the doorpost like brass toadstools; and what names to them, too—Jablonsky, Issipoff, Mme Cornelis,

Mulligan—names like those! No wonder if we are absorbed in such things.

All those people, with all the dependents of them, revolving planets, satellites, suns, moons of theirs—God knows what may be going on! Love, hate, murder, despair, remorse—oh, God knows what they may be doing to each other behind those immovable barriers!

Why, I remember a play of M. Maeterlinck's whose cardinal terror resided in nothing but a shut door. To be sure, a castle door, ironbound, massy and tall; but that matters nothing. What did matter was that it was shut. On one side of it a child in the hands of some fatal person of the poet's then fervid imagining; on the other an agonized mother beat and raved. It was horrible, it wasn't cricket. I couldn't stand it, I remember, and withdrew from the theatre. So I never knew whether she was let in. Almost certainly not. Such a ruthless poet was M. Maeterlinck in those early days of his, and such was I. Such, too, were shut doors—and such they are still to young men of sensibility up from the country.

And the case is not much bettered when by experience they come to know not only what in general may be enacting behind the doors, but what in particular. When the curiosity which, remember, was Fatima's in the nursery-tale, becomes an itch, a burning, a fever, and the opportunity comes at last, shaking, thrilling, they enter, and up the stair on tiptoe.

Then it may be that the attraction of the door becomes one of horror, a fascination, a witchery, and sometimes a torment. Remember the cry of one lacerated wretch:

> Ianua vel domina penitus crudelior ipsa,
> Quid mihi iam duris clausa taces foribus?

and the rest; a cry so wrung and anguishful that you must feel its truth even if you don't happen to know that every word of it was true.

That is the aching of too much acquaintance. The itch of too little was the beginning of the spell. Some enchanting vision at an upper window, it may have been some whisking skirt and silken ankle slipping in with a latchkey—and the door, the door that holds her fast! Thus is witchcraft of the town-door woven about ingenuous youth. Propertius was not the first or the last of them to be caught and bound, then to be left confronted without, *tacitis cardinibus*.

Village doorways have their enchantments, too; cottage doors open to the sun, with the dog asleep on the flagged path and the cat tucked up on the door-mat. You may go along an entire street of such hospitable, confiding houses, and see practically all that they have to show you. A white-faced clock against the wall, two china zebras on the mantelpiece, or a shining shepherdess in blue and lustre; a checked tablecloth with a loaf of bread on it; an old dame in a white cap at her fingering, a barebreeched boy sprawling at her feet; wallflowers under the house-wall, a lilac bush aflower in the garden; meek magic, but it warms the heart.

You think that you are in a comic-opera village; and if you act accordingly, as some do, that means that the fairy spell is working in you, and that you will be pinched. Perhaps Sir John Falstaff thought Windsor such a pastoral place—a place where pretty women's chins were to be chucked at sight, and kisses had for the asking. The town-dweller, free of the science of life as he knows it where he comes from, may be no less ingenuous than the

countryman up there. We are hospitable in the country, we are friendly, we plume ourselves upon our good manners, but we have our conventions like other people—only they are different.

One of them is that we don't like to be seen at meals. I have sometimes put that down to the survival of a genuine wild instinct—it survives in dogs and cats—to a remote antiquity of our race, when to be seen with a meal was to be seen with the most valuable thing in the world. True, that is going back to the First Stone Age, and allowing a liberal span to tradition—nevertheless, it is as I say. We don't like it. We sit distrait and uncomfortable. Conversation languishes; we don't go on eating. We see fat coagulating on the plate's edge; we leave the pudding bubbling to rags in the pot. It is the height of bad manners with us to intrude at such times.

Another thing: if you are so good as to call upon us, we vastly prefer to see you in the afternoon. That, we understand, is also the town custom; yet in the country how often do town people ignore it. If the fish aren't rising, or there's too much dew for lawn tennis, 'Let's go and call on dear old Mrs. So-and-so', or 'that pretty girl who married the baker the other day'. And they do it.

But we are busy in the morning, have a hundred things to do. We are in aprons, our hair is not done; we may be washing, or hanging out clothes, scrubbing a floor, nursing a baby. We are all alone; the parlour chairs want dusting. When the open door tempts you, you ought to remember these little things.

On Sundays, however, we shut our doors. That is our one day of domestic privacy. The Englishman's

house is then his castle, with the portcullis down. There are reasons. The good man is at home, in his shirt-sleeves, with the paper; the good wife is busy with dinner: the daughter of the house has her hair in pins or curl-papers. If it is she that you desire, she won't be presentable till noon, and then she may descend, and perhaps stand at the garden gate, as fresh as from a bandbox, to a weekday acquaintance an unknown quantity.

I saw one such last Sunday morning, a maid of fifteen or so, that dangerous age. Her hair stood out in an aureole of pale crinkled gold: her muslin, or whatever it was, was starched and ironed like Columbine's skirt in the harlequinade. She was point-device from the black bow on her head to the tips of her dainty shoes. A butterfly vision—where do the things come from? How do they contrive it, find time and thought for it? I don't know. What I do know is that I much prefer them in the pigtails and pinafores of Monday. But on Sundays they are as unapproachable as their houses are, where sacred rites are performed behind closed doors.

Manège

A MAN I know, something of a poet, with a pronounced inclination towards living his poetry as well as imagining it, married out of his caste, a village girl. When I went to see him the other day he told me something about his wife which I have taken the pains to confirm by observation. He did the thing thoroughly, you must understand, when, at the call of instinct or love, he decided to step down—or up, as he claimed it; for he lived unaffectedly in a cottage and did not concern himself to earn more than was subsistence on or about the cottage scale for the two of them, and what else their union might involve. He had something, and he made something. I suppose, at the outside, £300 a year came in. That don't go very far in these days. He did his full share of household duty, ran the garden, and an allotment, and would never suffer her to undergo any of the heavy daily jobs. It was he who wound up the bucket from the draw-well, carried the coals, chopped the fire-wood, cleaned the boots. He was always down before her, to light the kitchen fire and make her a cup of tea. In the intervals of these tasks he observed nature, birds chiefly, and scribbled when the fancy invited. But really nothing of that matters, except to point out the brisk, conscientious, theoretical fellow he was, and is.

He said, 'My wife is a beautiful woman, as you will allow,'—I did, and I do—'and she is at the same time the most innately good woman I have ever known; but the most beautiful feature she has, at once the most

expressive of herself and beneficent to mankind, is her hands. Have you ever noticed them? Do, when you can, without her finding you out. She knows that I admire them, and it makes her shy. But watch her handle a loaf of bread when she is cutting it; observe how the fingers travel and adjust themselves, each doing a definite piece of work. Watch her sewing, and don't omit to observe the play of the hand which is hidden in the work. Watch her, above all, knitting. The hand-play then is like the running of some exquisitely-timed engine. I can sit and look at it for hours together, and gain thereby higher hopes of our *genus* than I have ever been able to afford myself until now. Some day there may be reared in this place boys and girls with hands like their mother's to carry on the tradition.'

I asked him, 'Do you allow so little for your share in the transaction? Does brain go for nothing?'

He faced it. 'You are confusing substance and accident; mental capacity with education. I am more educated than she is, but my mental capacity is not necessarily higher. Or, in any case, it is her hands against my head. I prefer to look at final causes when I can; and here the heart, or the will, if you please, is the important thing. What are we actually here for? The scientists, the clergy, the engineers and the grocers all say, Progress. Progress to what end? Each of them names a different end.'

'The scientists, at least,' I said, 'and very possibly the clergymen also, would name Knowledge as the end.'

'No doubt they would. The engineer would put it at ease of production, and the grocer at wealth. My answer to all of them would be this: We are here in a world which we did not make and cannot fundamentally alter.

The utmost we can do is to make it more tolerable for ourselves. I don't mean by that oneself: I mean for our *genus*. Now the virtues which will do that are moral rather than intellectual. If you wish for a tolerable world it must be one in which you can be happy. To be happy, you must be good. Happiness, in short, is an affair for the heart and hands rather than for the mind. Quite certainly you nourish the mind at the expense of the other two; and if you do that, you make the world in the long run a less tolerable place. I don't say that pure science—mathematics, metaphysics and such like—won't give exquisite happiness to the qualified practitioner. But that is incommunicable happiness—not like religion, or applied art, or domestic labour, or agriculture, all of which give communicable happiness.'

'Medicine?' I asked him. 'Surgery?'

'Both altruistic,' he replied, 'and one at least an affair of the hands.' I could have pressed him, but I let him have his way.

'My wife's virtues', he resumed, 'are beneficial to mankind. She is happy in their exercise; she makes happiness. She is good, because her heart is good; she is efficient because her hands are perfectly trained. Her excellencies are the result of traditional use which is aeons old; custom handed down *vivâ voce*, *vivâ manu*, from the inconceivably bygone age when this land was peopled by her ancestors. She is of Iberian lineage; you can see it in every line and every hue. She herself, then, you may say, is an instance of high specialization, infinite slow adjustment to a time and place which have imperceptibly altered. You can't go wrong when, as seems to have happened with her family, no violence from outside has broken in, to shake the

tradition. Her hands and her heart are *in pari materiâ*. One symbolizes the other. Both are the result of continuous exact adjustment to what has confronted them. It would have been criminal folly if I, a *parvenu*, either spoilt bourgeois, or strayed descendant of peasants who had lost the tradition, had done anything to dislocate a sequence which, in her case, has been so wonderfully preserved.'

His vehemence interested me. I said, 'You are indeed a lover.'

'Watch her hands,' he said. So I did.

She came in by-and-by from her village affairs, took off her hat, put on her apron, and busied herself with tea-making. I watched her cut bread-and-butter, as Werther watched Charlotte, and admired. It was deftly and quickly done; and true enough the fingers travelled about over the uneven surface of the loaf as stone-crop embraces a boulder. She was tall for a woman, and had large, capable hands, tanned by the sun to a warm brown on the back, well-shaped certainly. The fingers were long and flexible, narrow, but not pointed at the tips, which were as sensitive, or seemed so, as the horns of a snail. They worked and felt about for holding-ground just in a snail's way. I saw that, as her husband had said, each had its appointed office; that, as in a boat's crew, each pulled its full weight; and I wondered if that was not the case with every child of Eve. Study afterwards convinced me that indeed it was not. My own hands, to go no further afield, are grotesquely clumsy. There seems to be no tactile virtue in my fingers at all. If I try to pick up a postage-stamp I must claw it with my nails; if I want to take an envelope from the rack I must always bring out

two. As for cutting bread-and-butter—what a botchery, what a butchery! I am no doubt an extreme case: you must compare like with like. I am now observing the ladies of my acquaintance, and their maids. I must say that the maids support my enamoured friend's argument.

With her knitting, which occupied her after tea, the same activity of all the fingers was very noteworthy. The ring-finger was particularly adept, and with most of us it is the drone of the bunch. While she knitted she conversed with me, sitting at the open door of the cottage. Like all beautiful women, she was sparing of speech, but by no means tongue-tied. Her talk, like her movements, was natural, unconscious, in harmony with herself. Though she had no general ideas, she was not unwilling to receive them, and was quick to give them particular application to things and persons of her acquaintance. And presently one thing struck me: her favourite word. It was 'manage'. When I had offered to carry out the tea-things to the scullery for her, she thanked me with a smile, and said that she could manage. When it was a question of a boy under a cloud, and the Vicar who was going to discharge him from the choir, she looked shrewdly out and thought that she could manage the Vicar. She dropped a stitch in her knitting—and managed. She managed any thing, and most bodies, so easily. No word was more often on her lips. Then etymology threw a beam of light. Manage—*manège*—handling! I was hugely pleased with my discovery. My friend took it as a matter of course. But it was getting late, and the time had come for me to go.

I had to walk round by the bridge in order to reach the starting-place of the motor omnibus. In time, therefore,

I was again in full view of my friend's cottage, removed from me now by the width of the river and valley-bottom. It stood up bravely on its high bank, radiant in the setting sun. The stone was warm grey, the thatch pale gold. The door was still open, and as I looked across the water-meadows towards it my recent hostess came out, a pannikin of chicken-food propped against her hip, and stood for a moment to look, shading her eyes from the sun. Presently she saw me, and waved her hand—that strong, large, good hand, so careful over many things, and so capable. It is very possible my friend was right; that the energy of her handiwork was a radiant energy.

Prolegomena to the Ballads

AS we have them now in Professor Child's vast repertory, the English and Scots Ballads are a quarry for more than the pure gold of poetry. The antiquary will pick his quartz from it, useful for building his curious house; the critic will be there, peeping and botanizing: the patriot will picnic; and the historian who passes by on the other side will hurt his cause. I ought to own, and don't at all mind owning, that my thoughts upon these often beautiful and always interesting things have been much turned of late to what underlies the poesy in them; that is, to the men who made them and the people for whom they were made. It has seemed to me possible that one's feeling for literature, and the instinct one has for the implications of self-utterance, ought to be as good a guide about the ways of an old poem as they may certainly be in those of a new one. Without any pretensions to archaeological expertise in the matter, I have a notion that literary tact and perhaps a certain knowledge added of the habits of men may help us to find out from the ballads what archaeology so far has not been able to give us. It ought not, in fact, to be impossible to be certified whether a ballad was written by a gentleman or a peasant, whether it was written for gentlefolk or for the peasants. That is my present line of attack.

The answer, if there is a chance of one, at any rate should be of high interest and apt to enrich our opinions

of the peasantry, which are so exceedingly vague because so exceedingly ill-formed. If we meet with a ballad plainly written by a court-poet for a cultivated auditory, we may leave it at that. We know as much as we need to know about cultivated poets. One Mr. Monro, indeed, knows too much for his own comfort, or theirs. And we know, I think, more than we need to know about a cultivated auditory. For the purpose of the real thing, of the great thing, in art, such an auditory is of little avail. It will seldom get the real or the great thing, partly because it does not want it, partly because the poet does. The only theatre—one example out of a hundred—which consistently plays Shakespeare as Shakespeare wrote it is the 'Old Vic.', which is supported by an uncultivated audience. But if you can happen upon a ballad plainly composed by a peasant, or for a peasant audience, not only are you made privy to the kind of audience which will receive and support the real thing, you are also taken immediately into the heart of a deeply interesting and most unknown people—deeply interesting because the peasantry in England by birth and birthright is aboriginal; most unknown owing to its consistent ill-treatment or neglect by the ruling races here throughout history.

God only knows the ancestry of any one of us, for directly a young man leaves his village (and our forefathers all left villages in their time) and mates in a city he is lost to the country, and takes into his blood and brain the tainted compost which he finds there; but, leaving to Caesar the things which are Caesar's, it is possible for imperfect man at least to be sure that in the peasant, remote from a metropolis, he has the fairly straight descendant of the British indigene. His rude forefathers, we know, were made serfs

by Kelt, Roman, Englishman, Norseman, Norman in turn. Be sure that they mated with their kind. His foremothers in turn were concubines of the invaders, and the children born to their possessors may have risen, or may have held to their mother's degree. In either case they would inevitably have mixed the blood: but the tradition is not mixed. Those people, on the mother's side, have been serfs for a thousand years, and are not much more than that now. The tradition—cradle-lore, lap-lore, mother's-milk-instinct—has persisted; and with very rare exceptions those who are peasants to-day are come of peasant ancestry. There may have been—indeed there have been—peasants who have risen to be yeomen, thence grown to be squires; but the cases are rare where men have sunk to be peasants. Mr. Hardy pleaded Norman descent for Tess Durbeyfield, Mr. Halsham for Kitty Fairhall. They may be right: but the D'Urbervilles sowed wild oats like other noble families; and some fell by the wayside.

It is necessary thus to place the peasant in order to see that his tradition, whether interesting or not, must needs be of high antiquity. Whatever it is or is not, it will be authentic. For a thousand years, practically, he learned all that he knew from his mother, his playmates and work-mates. He had no organized schooling until fifty years ago; he rarely moved from his ring-fence of five miles or so. He worked all day long with no holiday but Sunday. He had the recreations of an animal: rest, eating, drinking, love, fighting or watching a fight. What higher pleasures had he? Did he use his mind, such as it was? What moved him to laughter or tears? What thrilled his blood? Of what were his dreams? How did he utter his emotions? What did he love, what did he fear, what hope for, what

believe? Howsoever he expressed whatsoever of these feelings, there is but one way to discover. He may have carved or painted what he saw; he may have made such music as wind or string would suffer—all that 's as may be: but he *danced* as he felt, and he *sang* what he loved and believed. Singing and dancing moved together from the beginning, close partners. If they separated, and verse developed while the dance stood still, it was because the tongue is more flexible than the feet, and thought has wider wings than feeling.

The men of the Second Stone Age, the Iberians, to call them so, from whom the best of our peasantry are lineally descended, left no fictile art behind them (if, which is doubtful, they had any to leave) and their descendants have little or none to show. Their speech is clean gone. The authorities can only positively help us to one known Iberian root, and that is embedded in the word Britain. But, relying as we may upon tradition, we have a respectable body of folk-poetry, and here and there, though very sparsely, the actual work of a folk-poet who can be named. Such work will not, of course, be unadulterated. It will be that of a peasant who, having picked up letters, has learned his versifying and jogged his invention out of other men's poems. The clearest folk-poet we have is John Clare,[1] of whose verse a new and valuable selection has recently been published. He was a genuine peasant; son of a farm-labourer, and himself a farm-labourer when he was anything else but a child of Nature. He was born

[1] I leave Burns out for several reasons. Firstly, he was a Scotchman; secondly, he was not what we call a peasant—rather a yeoman; thirdly, he was a transcendent genius and could do what he pleased, and with whom he pleased.

in 1793, three years before Burns died. So far, a clear case; but only so far. He was published, lionized, patronized; he went to London and knew Charles Lamb; he had letters, he had books. Thereby, and to that extent, he was sophisticated. But it is easy to pick out of his work, very much of it of great excellence, what is innate and what derived. I am not aware of any other undoubted example of a peasant who was also a good poet, though there is doggerel—and very good doggerel too—in many a country churchyard which may belong to the peasants.

So we come back to the Ballads, and the dealings with them of such literary tact as I may possess.

To explain just what I want to do there is nothing like an example, and I have one ready in 'Glasgerion', which Child took from Percy's *Reliques*, and to which he appended 'Glenkindie', a Scots version from Jameson's *Popular Ballads*. The story of 'Glasgerion', which, if the name be a corruption of Glas Keraint (the Blue Bard), may be of Welsh origin, is this. Glasgerion was both king's son and harper, and the king's daughter, having fallen in love, made a tryst with him in her bower. Glasgerion told 'Jacke his boy' to wake him before cock-crow, and was so ill-advised as to tell him the reason. Jack played him false, sinning as D'Artagnan sinned with Miladi. Now take this:

> And when he came to that lady's chamber
> He thril'd upon a pinn;
> The lady was true of her promise,
> Rose up and lett him in.
>
> He did not take that lady gay
> To boulster nor to bedd,

But downe upon her chambre-floore
Full soon he hath her layd.

He did not kisse that lady gay
When he came nor when he goed;
And sore mistrusted that lady gay
He was of some churle's blood.

'Glenkindie' is not so clear, though 'Gib his man' plays the same trick as Glasgerion's Jack, and with like success. But—

She kent he was nae gentle knicht
That she had latten in,
For neither when he gaed nor cam
Kist he her cheek or chin.

He neither kist her when he cam,
Nor clappit her when he gaed;
And in and out at her bower window
The moon shone like the gleed.

The end in each is the same. The cheat is discovered, the lady kills herself, and the knight kills the cheat.

Plainly, without further question, that ballad was composed for a gentle auditory by a gentle poet. It is a case of passion as against appetite. Gallantry is involved rather than sentiment. The observation of that could only strike an audience accustomed to look upon the manners of churls *de haut en bas*. On these stanzas alone we may rule out 'Glasgerion' when we are looking for evidence of aboriginal human nature. And 'Glasgerion' may stand as a test case.

On more general principles we may rule out as definitely composed with an eye upon the dais all epical ballads which have an unmistakable chivalric ring—such noble poems as

'Otterburn' and the 'Hunting of the Cheviot'; and at the same time rule in all the 'Robin Hood' set, and such ramping tales of outlaws as 'Adam Bell' and 'Sir Andrew Barton'. These carry their evidence in their saucy faces. There is a plain animus in them towards the poor and the put-upon. I think, too, that we must admit as folk-ballad all the dramatic pieces, and all which seem to have originated in choric representation. That gives to the peasantry such splendid things as 'Edward' and 'Lord Randal', 'The Two Magicians', 'Binnory', and 'The Twa Sisters', 'The Cruel Brother', and 'Babylon' with its crude burthen, 'Eh, wow, bonnie!' The probability is that, with the peasantry, dancing came before singing, singing before rhyming. Consequently, where you get words obviously fitted to a dramatic game, you are getting among the primitives in our civilization. There is no question in these cases of internal evidence, rather of evidence inherent in the form of the ballad.

There remain an infinity where one must judge by what the poem says, or the way it says it. Take first 'Leesome Brand', which with a plot, according to Child, common to all Northern races, is only found with us in Scotland, and there much corrupted. The king's daughter is got with child by a stranger called Leesome Brand. When her time is at hand she tells her lover that she dare not bide at home, bids him to the stable to saddle two horses, has him take her tocher—sixty thousand pounds, Scots, I suppose; and off they go.

> When they had ridden about six mile
> His true love then began to fayle.
> 'O wae 's me,' said that gay ladye,
> 'I fear my back will gang in three.'

She cries for a midwife, the lover offers himself. That in itself is a mark of origin; but so is this:

> 'For no, for no, this munna be,'
> Wi' a sigh replied this gay ladye.
> 'When I endure my grief and pain,
> My company you maun refrain.'

That 's unmistakable. She bids him, rather, go hunting; but—

> 'Be sure ye touch not the white hynde,
> For she is o' the woman kind.'

He did not, as you might expect him to do, touch the white hind. He saw it and returned to his lady. He found her and her child both dead. Then he went to his mother's castle, where he forbade the welcome she was preparing. Says he:

> 'O I hae lost my golden knife;
> I rather had lost my ain sweet life!
> And I hae lost a better thing,
> The gilded sheath that it was in!'

Mother and child, gilded sheath and golden knife, may be restored to him by 'three draps of Saint Paul's ain blude'. And so they are.

It is pretty safe to say that wherever a ballad sets love above Church law it is of popular origin, for such is the instinct of the peasant to-day. But that is by no means a conclusive argument—to that extent poets of all classes sympathize with the peasantry, and perhaps, in their hearts, so do all women. The prudery of the woman here I think an infallible sign; and that particular *motif* is the groundwork of 'Bonnie Annie' also, which is otherwise proved

popular in origin by the superstition of the ill-starred passenger on shipboard:

> There 's fey folk in our ship,
> She winna sail for me.

There is magic in 'Leesome Brand' too, and the symbolism of the sheath and knife. Observe that the knife was golden and the sheath only gilt.

With a separate and distinct ballad called 'Sheath and Knife' we come to a difficult subject. This ballad has a beautiful refrain:

It is talked the world all over—
The broom blooms bonnie and says it is fair,
That the King's daughter goes with child to her brother:
And we'll never gang down to the broom onie mair.

It ends tragically. To be done with it shortly, I should say that the *motif* is not uncommon. It is in the 'Bonny Hind' with its obviously popular lines:

> Perhaps there may be bairns, kind sir,
> Perhaps there may be nane;

It is in 'Lizzie Wan', an assured folk-ballad:

> There is a child between my twa sides
> Between my dear billy and me;

It is in 'The King's Daughter, Lady Jean'.

The romantic treatment of incest is very rare in fine literature. Ford's play is, I think, the first instance in ours, and from that you must come down to *Laon and Cythna* to find another. If 'Sheath and Knife' and the rest of them, then, are literary rather than popular ballads, they must go in with Ford and Shelley. But I am sure that they are not. The lines I have quoted have the

peasant ring in them; the cadences, the locutions are all of the folk. For all sorts of reasons, moreover, more was known, and still is known, about the *motif* by the people who lived as the peasantry have always had to live than by the gentry. It will be observed that the matter is spoken of simply, not under the breath; and though death is always the end, there 's not much in that, for the greater part of the love-narratives have tragic endings. Lastly, pity rather than abhorrence is the note of them all.

Now I come to 'The Cruel Mother', of which there are numerous versions, all singing games with burthens. The best of them is B(a). in Child, and is English. A woman is delivered of a child in the green wood, and kills and buries it. The C. variant, which gives the mother twins, goes in this manner:

> She leaned her back unto a thorn:
> *Three, three, and three by three;*
> And there she has her two babes born:
> *Three, three, and thirty-three.*

In P. version, with a different refrain, the woman is 'A duke's daughter lived in York', who 'secretly loved her father's clerk'—that is, his chaplain or mass-priest. She has twins too. B., though imperfect, is the best of all:

> She sat down below a thorn,
> *Fine flowers in the valley;*
> And there she has her sweet babe born,
> *And the green leaves they grow rarely.*

When she is to kill the child she cries out to it:

> Smile na sae sweet, my bonnie babe,
> And ye smile so sweet, ye'll smile me dead.

But:

> She 's taken out her little pen-knife,
> And twinn'd the sweet babe o' its life.
>
> She 's howket a grave by the light o' the moon,
> And there she 's buried her sweet babe in.

And so on. Everything proves this a peasant ballad: the subject—infanticide; the gibberish refrain; the sentimental reiteration of 'sweet'—it is in every verse. To me, that very beautiful outcry, 'Smile not so sweet, my bonny babe', is enough by itself to settle it. I have heard things like it myself from peasant women. It is natural poetry. Unless the unknown poet was a Burns or a Lady Ann Lindsay, there can be no mistaking it. But Lady Ann Lindsays are rare birds, not caught for singing-games every day. I consider the B. version of 'The Cruel Mother' enough to immortalize any peasant.

'Willy's Lykewake' is a folk-ballad—on two grounds. It is a singing-game, to begin with; but it has also a homely, not to say coarse, touch upon its treatment which cannot be mistaken. Willy is in love with a girl who will not have anything to say to him. A friend tells him what to do; he must sham dead and be laid out. Then he must give

> the bell-man his bell-groat,
> To ring his dead-bell at his lover's gate.

So he does, and it answers. The girl goes to visit the corpse, which shortly

> took her by the waist sae sma',
> And threw her atween him and the wa'.

Then comes an appeal only too native:

O Willy, let me alane this nicht,
O let me alane till we're wedded richt!

Says he:

Ye cam unto me sae meek and mild,
But I'll mak ye gae hame a wife wi' child.

That ought to allocate 'Willy's Lykewake'.

I should pass over the fine romantic 'Twa Corbies' as assuredly written for the 'gentrice' but for the existence of an English version, 'The Three Ravens', with which to compare it. The comparison is very instructive. This 'Three Ravens' was first printed in a collection called *Melismata: Musicall Phansies, fitting the Court, Cittie and Country Humours, London,* 1611, and is as surely of peasant origin as the 'Twa Corbies' surely is not. Firstly, it has a rollicking chorus, neither to be desired nor approved by the gentry; secondly, instead of being romantic, it is sentimental. This is how it goes, with its burthen:

There were three ravens sat on a tree,
Downe a downe, hay downe, hay downe,
There were three ravens sat on a tree,
With a downe;
There were three ravens sat on a tree,
They were as blacke as they might be:
With a downe derrie, derrie, derrie, downe, downe.

Now consider the treatment of the dead knight. Firstly, his creatures defend him, instead of being away upon their business, as in the 'Corbies':

His hounds they lie down at his feete,
So well they can their master keepe.

His hawkes they flie so eagerly,
There 's no fowles dare come nie.

In the 'Corbies' the knight's lady had taken another mate. Not so in the 'Ravens', but—

Downe there comes a fallow doe,
As great with young as she might goe.

She lift up his bloudie head,
And kist his wounds that were so red.

She got him up upon her backe,
And carried him to earthen lake (*sic*).

She buried him before the prime,
She was dead herselfe ere evensong time.

God send every gentle man,
Such hawkes, such hounds, and such a leman.

Note the genial conclusion. 'The Twa Corbies' is a finished literary product; 'The Three Ravens' the real thing.

I cannot be sure of 'Kemp Owyne', where a woman turned into a monster is redeemed by three kisses. It is not a good, and is in any case a corrupt, ballad; but it has this fine verse where Kemp Owen, or Kempion, as he should be called, is wrestling with the sea-beast, to wit, the lady:

Her breath was strang, her hair was lang,
And twisted was about a tree;
And with a swing she came about:
Come to Craigy's Lea and kiss with me.

I suspect that great third line betrays both origin and audience, but there is no other internal evidence to swear by. A rough and ugly fairy-tale, anyhow, by origin Icelandic, Child says.

Now we must face 'Thomas Rymer', which, if the folk can claim it, is a great feather for their caps. Few nations,

indeed, could procure for themselves a wilder or nobler poem. But I think there is great doubt about the best version (A. in Child):

> For forty days and forty nights
> He wade in red blude to the knee,
> And he saw neither sun nor moon,
> But heard the roaring of the sea.

Is not that 'literary' verse? I think so, but stand to correction. It is at any rate among the finest romantic narrations in ballad literature; but surely rather high doctrine for a peasant auditory. On the other hand, Child's Version C. has a line which points to a rustic assembly. Thomas takes the Queen of Faëry for her of Heaven—as he does also in A. In A. she denies it, thus:

> O no, O no, True Thomas, she says,
> That name does not belong to me;
> I am but the Queen of fair Elfland,
> And I'm come here to visit thee.

In C. she denies it; but thus—

> I'm no the Queen of Heaven, Thomas;
> I never carried my head sae hie;
> For I am but a lady gay,
> Come out to hunt in my follee.

A very rural ring there. And one other observation falls to be made, which is that in A. the lady has no difficulty in naming herself, whereas in C. she avoids doing so. To this day the peasantry of the West are shy of naming the Good People. In C. the fine verse, 'For forty days and forty nights', is attenuated, in two others not nearly so good. Child connects A. with the romance of Ogier the Dane and Morgan le Fay, in which also the fairy was mistaken for

the B.V.M. C., then, might either be a later adaptation of A., for popular uses, or, equally well, older than either A. or the romance. The peasants would have had no use for Ogier the Dane.

I have referred to 'The Two Magicians' already, a contest between magic and brawn, between an enchanted lady and a very strenuous blacksmith. It is as much a singing-game as 'Here we go round the Mulberry Bush', and much more dramatic. A crude game, and a coarse, but full of spirit. Halfway through the piece the refrain changes. It is thoroughly rustic, and doubtless of high antiquity.[1]

'Young Andrew' is a ruthless ballad charged with pity and terror. A girl gives herself to him, then begs him to marry her. So he will if she will steal her father's treasure and follow him out on to the moors. These things she does. Having brought her out there he makes her undress—gown, kirtle, petticoat and smock—and sends her naked home. Her father refuses her admittance, and she dies on the doorstep. Compare with it 'May Collin', where a girl similarly used makes her ill-user turn his back upon her while undressing. Both tales are of peasant birth. There were no Lady Godivas among that caste, the last shame of whose women was to be seen undressed. The girl's feelings in 'Young Andrew' are touchingly expressed:—

> Says, O remember, young Andrew,
> Once of a woman you were born;
> And for that birth that Mary bore
> I pray you let my smock be upon.

In 'May Collin' she was more summary, and scorned to

[1] Mr. Cecil Sharp has published this, with its traditional tune, in *County Songs*.

beg such an obvious right. Characteristic of the peasant, too, is the father's refusal to let his daughter come in, based upon the theft of his 'gude red gold'; and that when he finds her dead in the morning her state moves him more than his own, and as much as her death:

His own deere daughter was dead, without clothes;
The tears they trickled fast from his ee.

For all this, 'Young Andrew' is not a very good ballad.

There follow, in Child, a number of chivalric things, of courtly origin: 'Sir Patrick Spens', 'Sir Aldingar', 'King Estmere', and 'Sir Cauline', one of the best of them. Then comes 'Lord Thomas and Fair Annie', one of the best ballads in the world.

Annie has borne seven sons to Lord Thomas, and is about to bear him an eighth when he tells her that he is going abroad to fetch home a braw and a brisk bride. But who, he asks her, will brew his bridal ale for him, and welcome the bride? Annie, it appears; but she must 'gang like maiden fair', if she is to satisfy Lord Thomas. Her only complaint is upon that article.

But how can I gang maiden like
When maiden I am nane?
Have I not borne seven sons to thee,
And am with child again?[1]

The scene shifts: she is meeting Lord Thomas and the bride, her seven sons about her.

You're welcome to your ha's, ladye,
You're welcome to your bowers;
You're welcome to your hame, ladye,
For a' that's here is yours.

[1] Not to be matched, I think, except in the 'Wife of Usher's Well', for the beauty of simple and sincere statement.

The lady, in thanking her, reveals the plot:

> I thank thee, Annie, I thank thee, Annie,
> So dearly 's I thank thee;
> You're likest to my sister Annie
> That ever I did see.

That is to turn out the truth of it: meantime there is much sad work for Annie. She must serve the tables; but she cries all the time. Lord Thomas is aware of that:

> And he 's taken down the silk napkin
> Hung on a silver pin,
> And aye he wipes the tears trickling
> A' down her cheek and chin.

But he remains the original brute:

> And aye he turn'd him round about
> And smiled among his men:
> Says, like ye best the old ladye,
> Or her that 's new come hame?

Now the bridegroom and the bride are gone to their chamber, when Annie's lament is overheard:

> Gin my seven sons were seven young rats
> Running on the castle wa',
> And I were a grey cat mysell,
> I soon would worry them a'.

The bride cannot abide it, and goes, dressed as she still is, to see Annie. The truth comes out; the bride does the proper thing, with her

> Thanks to a' the powers in heaven
> That I gae maiden hame.

As Annie was indeed her stolen sister, it is to be hoped that she went with her.

There are several versions, all Scots. B. is longer and more elaborated, and has a stronger rat stanza; but nobody can doubt the folk-origin of the beautiful thing. It has all the characteristics of the peasantry, *naïveté*, mother-love, sentimentalism, and realism.

I stop, gravelled for lack of space, not of matter. I am not a quarter of the way through Child; but enough has been done, I hope, to initiate the *Corpus Poeticum Villanum* which I should wish some day to be compiled. The first requisite of such a book is elimination. One must rule out the literary, the cooked, the faked, as well as the obviously gentlemanly ballads. When you have your *Corpus* it will be time enough for the ethnologist with his microscope.

A Spring Miscellany

I HAVE been excited by Mr. Eliot Howard's book on *Territory in Bird-Life*, partly so I fear for the egotistical reason that I have observed for myself much of what he says. Briefly his argument is that courtship and marriage in those nations depend upon the cock-bird's rent-roll; that the male neither proposes nor disposes, but the female does both; that bird-marriage in fact is *de convenance*. I believe him. The cock of the walk (which is really the hen) is generic, must not be confined to the farmyard bird. It is a fact of simple, but prolonged, observation that the same birds haunt the same tracts of garden year after year —we have a stammering cuckoo, with four *cucks* to one *coo* which has been here at least four years running; and that they are only concerned to drive off it members of their own tribe. To do that is, at any rate, more important to them than anything else. They will rather suffer a hawk. The chief reason seems to be that birds are strict endogamists, and have no fear of the attentions of any other species to their wives. Another may well turn upon the food-supply, which differs from kind to kind. On that account a blackbird will always chevy out a thrush. It is a matter of commissariat; for though miscegenation has been known among these two, and a hybrid produced, it is very rare: not practical politics.

By inference one can gather that, whereas the polygamous birds observe the patriarchal tradition, the monogamous are

strict matriarchists. Outside those two great and venerable economies come the house-sparrows whose loves are proverbially flagrant, and the cuckoos, which are polyandrous. I hate that bird, which furnishes the ugliest word in our language, and the jolliest noise (at least for a week) which the air can send us. The hen-cuckoo's call, not to say solicitation, has been well described by a recent writer as obscene. It is so, because it is cynical; she appears at once to crave, to gloat, and to say, 'I knew you would'. It is on a par with her deplorable moral code. 'Manners, none; customs, disgusting.' Yet there 's no denying that the cock-bird makes a jolly noise. The first of it is awaited by the many with the interest which the few have for the advent of swallows, which I personally have for that of the swifts. We have a date—everybody has a date—for the cuckoo. The day after Britford fair, we say. Sure enough, it came thereabouts this year, though in the teeth of a wintry gale. It is an odd thing that Gray, who kept careful records of bird, flower, and leaf for his friend Thomas Warton, never seems to have remarked the cuckoo at Cambridge. He hears and notes the nightingale, observes his first swallow, knows when the young rooks caw in the nest. But when he names the cuckoo he has to fetch up a date from a friend in Norfolk.

Talking of winter in April, which is now the rule, I am confirmed by Gray in my conviction that the times are changed. In 1755 the lime, he says, was in leaf at Cambridge on the 16th April; in 1763 on the 9th. There was not a sign of green upon mine this year until the first week in May. And so with most things. I have taken the trouble to study his lists. In January, February, March we are neck and neck; in some things fairly in

advance. In April we drop behind, and never catch him up again. He had his fruit three weeks earlier than we ever do now. What is the meaning of that? I feel sure—and all the elderly weather-wise about here, shepherds, gamekeepers, carriers and the like, agree with me—that our winters have become our springs, and our springs our winters. A Christmas Number of the 'seventies, as I remember them, is not in touch with life as we know it now. The Squire's daughter, with her basket of buns and oranges for the deserving poor, would never need that snug red cloak, that muff of swansdown, those fur-edged boots. She would want them now for Easter Sunday. What has happened? I speak as a fool, but suggest the eruption of Mount Pelée in Martinique, throw it out like a bone for seismologists to mumble. Suppose that the levels of the sea-floor had been materially altered, might that not affect the Atlantic currents? If it did, might not that vary the dispersal of icebergs? I have understood that our cold weather depends upon the icebergs. That being so, the earlier those monsters come out the better.

'May 5, 1761... I pass half the week at Strawberry, where my two passions, lilacs and nightingales, are in full bloom. I spent Sunday as if it was Apollo's birthday. Gray and Mason were with me, and we listened to the nightingales till one o'clock in the morning'. That was Horace Walpole a hundred and sixty years ago. *Et ego in Arcadia...!* Nightingales, it is true, shun this part of Wilts, for they demand oak-trees as well as water, and there is only one in the whole of this parish. But lilacs, poets—if these delights the mind may move, then South Wilts has as good a claim as South Middlesex, I hope. Nothing

excels the glory of the lilacs this year, except that of the pear-trees. I had several in a smother of bloom, and I saw them so in Lancashire at the end of February. But the end of that was despondency and madness, for the icebergs came out of the St. Lawrence in April; the winds arose and beat upon those pear-trees, aud barely a flower of them has set in the open ground. It will not be credited what havoc may be wrought by spring in February and winter in April. I had a wistaria loaded with silk purses, all turned into sows' ears, and the tree itself killed outright. One night's work. I won't speak of magnolias, they are too sore a subject, nor of the amelanchier, one of the loveliest of trees and here a constant friend. It has been apt, unlike the Prisoner of Chillon, to grow white in a single night—a yearly miracle which I always await with suspense. This year it grew brown within the same space of time. 'These are my crosses, Mr. Wesley.'

The wise man is he who shuns the violent delights of blowth and concentrates on foliage. In that he will never be disappointed. So here I turn from brown magnolias and scorched spiræas to tall taxodiums which are just now like pillars of fire-amber, and backed by a cumulus of silver poplar; to the satin-sheen of a beech hedge; to the wine colour of the young aspens, and the blue fire which 'illumes the juniper', as the poet says. These things must happen, for the tree must breathe; and if they provide but symphonies of half tones instead of the flaunting show upon which the senses may get drunk, I reasonably decide that it is better to live soberly, in the mean.

'If British officers shoot peacocks, natives will shoot British officers', was the notice put up in certain cantonments of India once upon a time. I have been forced to

proclaim it to the nation of bullfinches. We had an invasion of them this year, and I caught them *in flagrante delicto*. Natives therefore shot British bullfinches, and the host retired, but not before they had stripped the plums, half the peaches, and more flowering shrubs than I care to rehearse. Mr. Massingham will be vexed; but perhaps Mr. Massingham has not got a peach-wall.

'Pretty Witchcrafts'

THE phrase is Herrick's and, as he uses it, ambiguous; for it is not certain whether the 'Witchcrafts' were of his own contriving, or contrived upon him by his neighbours, or his neighbours' wives. Inquiry into so curious a matter is a thing which the editor of my edition of the poet, Mr. A. W. Pollard, deprecates in his preface. Fortunately, he says, we know just enough of Herrick to make 'chatter about his relations with Julia and Dianeme impossible. In other words we know when he was born, when dead, where buried; we know that he wrote verses sacred and profane; but why he wrote them, how, where when, to whom they were addressed, by whom inspired—nothing: and it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter at all unless a poet is at least as interesting as his poetry. Well! I believe that he is, am indeed prepared to maintain that he is always more interesting than any amount of it. I would ground myself upon the general axiom that, to a man, nothing in the world is so momentous as mental process, and on the more specific inference that if the poet does attract one more than his poem, it is because his poem is a good one—or such a bad one as to be pre-eminent in that kind. Why is it that you always desire to climb a waterfall? Either that you may get as high as possible—infirmity of noble minds; or that you may see how the thing works. So it is with most of us confronted with a masterpiece.

The little poem 'To his Mistresses', in which Herrick invokes the ladies as his 'pretty Witchcrafts all', is neither a masterpiece nor a very pretty conceit. It is a whimsical lament over his growing burden of years. Such, he tells *ces dames*, is the deplorable fact. Old I am, he says,

> and cannot do
> That I was accustomed to.

He calls upon them for their 'magics, spells, and charms', reminding them that

> Æson had, as poets feign,
> Baths that made him young again;

and then urges them

> Find that medicine, if you can,
> For your dry, decrepit man
> Who would fain his strength renew,
> Were it but to pleasure you.

Not the most gallant way of putting it, perhaps; but so far, so good. There were ladies then whose bright eyes and restorative arts were necessary to the poet. I hope it is not indiscreet to inquire a little more particularly into them and their therapeutic.

In another poem, still harping on mortality, Herrick enumerates and names what, from the context, may be considered a kind of harem. It is numbered thirty-nine in the *Hesperides* which contains well over a thousand poems, and announces the loss of friends who are the principal concern of those which follow it: but chronology was not observed by the minstrel or his editor; or if it were, there were certainly pippins and cheese to come.

Here they are then:

I have lost, and lately, these
Many dainty mistresses;
Stately Julia, prime of all;
Sappho next, a principal;
Smooth Anthea for a skin
White, and Heaven-like Chrystalline;
Sweet Electra, and the choice
Myrrha for the lute and voice;
Next Corinna, for her wit,
And the graceful use of it;
With Perilla: all are gone;
Only Herrick's left alone
For to number sorrow by
Their departures hence, and die.

To the bower here peopled, and to various annexes of it—a Sylvia, a Mrs. Dorothy Kennedy ('his dearest'), a Mrs. Elizabeth Wheeler, 'under the name of Amaryllis', a Dianeme in particular, a Mrs. Margaret Falconbridge, and a notably 'most virtuous Mistress Pot', perhaps honorary or visiting members—Herrick's *Hesperides* of eleven hundred and thirty-one poems is mainly devoted. A goodly monument to the five senses indeed. He was by no means alone in his day in the cultivation of those organs, but few celebrated their satisfaction with a smoother harmony or a more curious research of simile and image. He is not such a fine metrist as Campion, and in comparison with that sweetest singer of our quire it must be owned that he gloats overmuch. Perhaps the nightingale gloats: it sounds like it. Herrick is fully as luscious; and like the nightingale he ends in a croak. His last, an italicized line, is

Jocund his muse was, but his life was chaste.

Come lei crede! Nobody is required to believe that his occasionally preposterous proposals to Dianeme and others should be taken seriously, or were so. And we are all meeserable sinners, of course. But even such a sinner should have his proper pride. I greatly prefer Landor's epitaph to Herrick's, holding it barely decent to publish a close relation of your revellings and such-like, and in the last line to protest that there was nothing in it.

What it precisely was which Herrick proposed to nearly all of those ladies I can hardly record in my own tongue. With one significant exception, *faire la noce* is near enough. In such a matter there is all the difference in the world between proposal and acceptance; and personally I don't believe that he did, in every case, or necessarily in any, all the pleasures prove. But to say, as I have heard it said, that the ladies themselves were mental exercises, 'pretty witchcrafts' of his own, is to blink the nature of man. Cervantes knew better. Dulcinea existed, a blowsy wench —but a peg. And so it was with the Vanessas and Stellas, the Rosalinds and Cynthias of love-poetry. *Cherchez la femme.* There will always be a peg (or a Peggy). She may be a square one, or a round one; but trust the poet to fit in.

Beyond saying that an examination of the *Hesperides* will reveal a consistent character attached throughout to each nymph named, I propose to dismiss all of them, *chacune à sa chacunière*, but one. That one is

Stately Julia, prime of all,

who is worth a moment's notice for Herrick's sake; for as he loved her best, so he feared her most; as he loved her first, so he loved her last; and there are clear signs,

I think, that she was the only one of them who shared his rustication in Devon. She is the heroine of at least forty-nine poems; and as her portraiture is the closest, so evidently was her commerce, although, as I have said, she was the only one to whom he never made proposals. No. 342 contains her picture, and shows her to have been after the Rubens manner of lady:

> Will ye hear what I can say
> Briefly of my Julia?
> Black and rolling is her eye,
> Double-chinn'd and forehead high;
> Lips she has all ruby red,
> Cheeks like cream enclareted;
> And a nose that is the grace
> And proscenium of her face.
> So that we may guess by these
> The other parts will richly please.

They did. He expounds a great deal more of her *passim*, not always with so much felicity as gusto. Her clothes equally engage him. She had a style all her own, wore the tempestuous petticoat. He celebrated, as everybody knows, the liquefaction of her clothes. In No. 114 her girdle engages him:

> As shows the air when with a rainbow grac'd,
> So smiles the riband 'bout my Julia's waist.

Unfortunately, in the very next piece, that became 'a frozen zone'; for she was cross, and the poet quenched. A high-coloured, full-breasted, buxom lady was Julia, beyond doubt: 'strawberries half-drown'd in cream', claret and cream, cream and cheese, rubies, corals, scarlet, cherry ripe, 'roses when they blow'—those are her epithets. Yet there was more to it than zest. He trusted her with what he valued most, his fame:

Julia, if I chance to die
Ere I print my poetry,
I most humbly thee desire
To commit it to the fire;
Better 'twere my book were dead
Than to live unperfected.

In No. 150 she has quarrelled with him, not for the first time:

When Julia chid I stood as mute the while
As is the fish or tongueless crocodile;

and whether by accident or design his next poem to her address is a proposal to separate:

Permit me, Julia, now to go away;
Or by thy love decree me here to stay.

Apparently she did permit him. No. 157 begins, 'Love-sick I am, and must endure'; and No. 159:—

And cruel maid, because I see
You scornful of my love and me,
I'll trouble you no more; but go
My way where you shall never know
What is become of me . . .

But it was soon over. In No. 175 he is doting on her petticoat, 'like a celestial canopy'; in No. 182 in ecstasies over a bee which took honey from her lip. After that, in No. 204, she was feverish, a serious matter.

As time, or the book, went on, she grew more deeply into his intimacy. In No. 446 she was that valuable ally of a clergyman, his congregation at the daily office:—

Besides us two i' th' temple here 's not one
To make up now a congregation—

but he trusted to her merits to bring saints in to fill the

pews. Unless Herrick, when he was ousted by Cromwell's Commissioners, took duty elsewhere (which is very unlikely) that implies that Julia lived at Dean Prior. In No. 586 she seems to have been ill. He tells her that she should be prayed for. No. 702 is this:

> I press'd my Julia's lips, and in the kiss
> Her soul and love were palpable . . .

It is the first time he says so much. In No. 807 he puts upon her a domestic duty; she is to make a wedding cake, but obviously not her own. I think that she was married; at any rate, in No. 900, she was churched. In No. 959 she makes her offering; in No. 976 there is a christening. In No. 1092 there was a momentary quarrel, a question of parting, repented of before the last line. In No. 1097 he makes his last request of her:

> Beg for my pardon, Julia: he doth win
> Grace with the gods who's sorry for his sin.
> That done, my Julia, dearest Julia, come
> And go with me to choose my burial room.
> My fates are ended; when thy Herrick dies
> Clasp thou his book, then close thou up his eyes.

That he really loved the handsome, flouncing, exuberant, hot-tempered girl, one of his most passionate poems, 'The night-piece to Julia,' is enough to prove. There is rarely passion in Herrick's verse. That he respected her, will be discovered by a comparison of his songs to her with those to his other Witchcrafts. That he depended upon her, I have shown by extract. It seems certain that she, of all of them, knew him in the country. The rest of the bevy may have been ladies of the town in any sense of the term. Pegs anyhow; but I doubt if they were much more. Julia was a great deal more.

The Brothers' Tragedy

THIS is a tale which I heard when I first settled in Wilts. That was something like eighteen years ago, and it may be two years older—not more. It is so typical of the Western people, who, mind you, are as nearly aboriginal as may be, that it may stand instead of a lengthy chapter of exposition. There is a ballad in it for who has the knack. Mr. Masefield, perhaps, if he would not overlay it with ornament. Its outstanding merit is its bare simplicity. Two brothers, who, if not twins, were near in age, lived with their widowed mother and sister Annie in an outlying cottage some half a mile away from a village perhaps twelve miles from Sarum, standing in a narrow valley, folded in the downs. Call the brothers Steven and Robert, and know Robert as Bob. Bob was a steady, plain fellow, who worked hard and kept the household going. He was a shunter in the goods yard at Sarum, and on night-duty as often as not. I never saw him, but if he was as true to type in appearance as he was in nature, he was short, sturdy, square-faced, long-headed, with ruminating grey eyes and a gentle voice. Steven his brother was a bad lot. In a village with a drink-tradition (very rare here, but yet to be found scattered about), he drank, and did worse. He spent money, betting, and tried to find more by poaching. Frequently he failed to find it, or to find enough; and then he learned that his old mother was afraid of him and

might be intimidated. She was. Bob's money was handed out florin by florin; and Bob must be deceived with tales of unexpected charges, and Annie must lend herself to the cheat. Whether Bob was in fact deceived we are to learn; at any rate he said nothing, had no speech with his brother, and accepted skimped meals without comment. The two men very seldom met, for Steven was out all day and home late to bed, while Bob either left before he returned, or long before he was up, as his duty might be. It was perhaps as well. Bob was very quiet, a still water, but stubborn like all his race, and strong for his rights, once he was sure of them. Steven, in his cups or out of them, freely expressed his scorn of the 'mug', as he called him; yet it did not appear that the two had ever conflicted publicly. It might have been better if they had—who knows?

Things went on badly, and worsened. Steven's levies became more frequent, his threats more ferocious; the two women were terrorized. They at least dared say nothing to Bob—and Bob said nothing to them. Then one night the blow fell.

Steven came to the house at about eight o'clock in the evening. He had been drinking, and was in a cold rage, they said. He asked for money, all they had. It was the second demand in a week, and there was nothing to meet it. So they told him, trembling. He said, 'You will have it for me at midnight, or you'll rue it. I shall come back for it at midnight.' They lied to him in their fear. 'You'll find Bob here, if you do come.' He scorned them. ''Tis a lie. I know where Bob is. Mind your business, have the money here, or I'll come up and take it.' 'You cannot take what I have not got.'

But he swore, 'I know what you've got. Have it ready, or I'll do for the two of you.' Then he went out.

That was at eight o'clock. The two women ate their cold supper, without comment, without any speech at all, it was said. At ten o'clock they went upstairs. They slept in the same bed. Annie was the quicklier undressed and was about to get into bed when her mother turned to her. 'You must wash your feet, Annie; you must wash your feet.' Annie said, 'Why, whatever do you mean, Mother?'

Her mother showed her a white face and pair of looming eyes, all black. 'There's a man coming, will see you in your bed. You would not be found with dirty feet?' No comment at all, or further speech. The two women washed their feet, and lay side by side in the bed.

There they lay broad awake, without speaking, in that intense silence of the downland country, where the shuddering cry of the great owl is the only noise at all, and the dark seems to fold down over it like a great blanket which has been lifted for a moment. It was said afterwards that they had quaked for fear, and evident that they did not doubt for an instant what was impending. One may be amazed at the inertia, unless one knows the people. I don't know that the question was put to either of them, why they did not run to a neighbour's. If it had been it would not have been understood. Who shall escape doom? And what is the respite of one night? And how should they reveal such a family secret as the villainy of a son and brother? So the two hours passed, and there they lay side by side, broad awake in the dark, quaking with cold or apprehension. Then they heard a step on the flags of

the path; and then the sudden discharge of a gun, a shattering noise in that immense quiet.

They lay still, it was said, till dawn, which came slowly up, for it was the early spring of the year. Which of them made so bold as to open the door I don't know. But they found Steven lying out there, shot through the head; and Bob never came home to breakfast.

Bob had gone into Salisbury early in the morning, and had given himself up to the police. He was cautioned, but chose to make a statement, which was taken down. It was very simple. He had been aware of everything from the beginning, which was some years back. He had watched, waited, said nothing; he had seen how matters were likely to go, had made his mind up what must be done, and when the time came he had done it. It was afterwards proved that Steven had boasted in his cups of what he was going to do on the fatal night, both before his eight o'clock visit and after it. Bob had had intelligence of that, and had stayed back from his night duty. I did not hear whence he had had the gun, or whether it was his own, or even his brother's. He was, of course, committed to the Assizes, and in due course was tried at Salisbury. He held to his story, and hid nothing. The jury presented a verdict of Not Guilty.

I don't know whether such a verdict has ever been given before, but it made a sensation all over the county, and two years or more later, when I came to live here, was still in men's mouths. I was talking the other day of the Italian verdict, *Assassino per amore*. This resembles it, except that the love-crimes contemplated with pity in Italy are not usually those of family-love. But, as I also had occasion to say, when the law of Nature

conflicts with the law of the land, the peasant is always on Nature's side. So here.

Very much of the Wiltshire peasant is in that tale: his vast patience, his counsel-keeping, his wary watchfulness, his good shooting. And lastly his fatalism. Those two women abed may stand for that, figures, to me, of Aeschylean proportions. Hardy's peasant-mother comes to mind:

> I bore a daughter flower-fair,
> In Pydel Vale, alas for me;
> I joyed to mother one so rare,
> But dead and gone I now would be.
>
> Men looked and loved her as she grew.
> And she was won, alas for me;
> She told me nothing, but I knew,
> And saw that sorrow was to be.

They do see that, all too often. But they rarely attempt to avoid it.

The man who told me the tale had been at the trial.

The New Way

I LEARNED something yesterday which up to then I had not known. I learned where we were. It is curious how the mind will absorb a number of plain facts and not relate or coördinate them, but let them stay where they settle, like starlings on an elm, jostling each other, crowding each other out. Presently some trivial incident is taken into consciousness, which immediately, as by a conjuring trick, settles all the others huddling in the mind into relation and sequence. It is like the chemical solvent which clears a muddy brew.

I knew, of course, that Lady Astor was a member of Parliament, and inferred that Lady Rhondda, if she pressed it, might be summoned to the House of Lords. I knew that women could be called to the jury box, and that I had a lady colleague, a sister magistrate, at Sarum. I have in fact two such. All that I knew, and more; and yet I had not realized, as I say, exactly where we all were. Then came the solvent—such a still small thing—and I knew. A visitor was announced to me sitting where I now am, a lady, a Miss So-and-so. More people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows, especially when Tom is ever so little in the public eye. Into the library she came, a girl of, say, two-and-twenty, trim in a belted raincoat, good-looking, soft-spoken, with a pair of very honest, clear grey eyes. I did not know her from Eve, and she was not of my village. We bowed, and then

I asked her to what I was indebted for the honour—the approved Walter Scott, Louis Stevenson manner of approach. She produced from her bosom a folded paper, which I recognized at a glance. Would I please to attest a vaccination-paper. I blushed to remember to how many staunch individualists I had opened a clear road to small-pox; but on this occasion I blushed for what was to come. My man might, after all, have mis-heard the lady. It was in any case my duty to point out to her that it was the husband's declaration which I must record. I varied the inquiry to meet the case by saying that it was the father's affair. 'No, sir,' she said succinctly, 'the mother's.' That unlocked the gate. 'You are not married?' 'No, sir.' There was no more to say. The thing went by common form. The child, with three romantic forenames and its mother's surname, was laid out to be the battle-ground of Providence and the small-pox, those inveterate foes. The mother signed its warrant, and so did I. The incident was closed.

Now you may say that there is nothing new here, and in a sense be right. The young woman was not the first in that condition to do such a piece of work; but she was the first to do it as she did. From others the facts must be dragged by persistence, and admitted with tears or shameful face. In this case—no such matter. Plain statement; neither tears, nor knocking of the breast, neither shameful nor brazen face. This young girl, whatever she ought to have been, was not ashamed, and certainly not brazen. She was quiet and businesslike. She had taken on the duties of motherhood seriously and practically. One of these was the duty of citizenship, the exercise of the Rights of Man as the West of England

conceives them and the law allows. If this child made mother thought it well that her baby should take the risk, she could declare it before a magistrate. And so she did, without a quickening of the blood.

That is where we are now. There were none of the makings of a Hetty Sorrel, a crazy Nell, or an Effie Deans to be had. Very far from that. However gotten, in what passion of abandonment, in what tide, caught in what eddy of surging instinct, or folly, or mere frivolity, or worse—however gotten, gotten it was, and so much to the good. It must be tended, provided for by its parent in the house of her own parents, fancifully named, taken to church, shown to the neighbours, freed from vaccination like every true-born son of Wilts. Was its mother to hide her shame? She had none now to hide. That was done with. She had done what she had, or suffered what she must, folly or worse, in a world of foolish or worse people. Did she love the father of her baby? Apparently, not at all. They had been fools together, or worse. Now there was come a sudden glory upon her, and foolishness was put by. Her son made her a citizen, and she must provide for his future as best she could, seeing it was no business of anybody else. There is no other way of reading her self-possession, her high seriousness throughout our interview, or the purpose in her clear grey eyes. Nothing in that? There's history in it, the Four Years' War, the Peasants' Union, and the Corn Act, which is the peasants' Charter.[1] If they are as good as the rest of the world, able to sit at council-board with squire and farmer, they will be able to cope with parish-

[1] *Was* so, but now is not. The Government in its exigency is repealing it as I write.

priest, and with Mrs. Grundy too. They are men, not serfs, women, not chattels—men and women, not children of adoption and grace. Nothing in it? The New Age is in it.

I don't approve, or disapprove, but I state it. In its way I must respect it. It shows, for one thing, a discrimination between the fundamental and the surface things in life. Parenthood is one thing, and marriage is another, one a good deal the older relation. In my belief happiness consists in the two—but who am I to say that either without the other is not in itself a good? A child is a child, however begotten, and its mother a mother however made so. It is something to see that much straight. Then comes in the equality of sexes. If the man who had transgressed could hold his head up—why was that? Plainly, they say now, because he carried no badge about with him. But is a child to be held for a badge? A badge of what? Not shame at least; for whatever is shameful, it is not child-birth. Let us look these things in the face. That is where we are.

Old Style

IF Time is, as the hymn says, an ever-rolling stream—and the figure will serve me just now as well as any—it carries down with it detritus of the monuments which we rear in the fond hope of defying it, which in turn buries the successors of them. So imperial Caesar, given opportunity, will obliterate the titles on Constantine's trophy, and dust from Baalbec smother Egyptian Thebes. Nothing truly survives but the negligible; yet it is just that, the infinitely little, which alone can restore to us the infinitely much. Consider the Roman Wall crumbling down into mounds of blown sand, the turf and moss and harebells making cushions of what were once bastions: yet by and by we light upon the rut worn in an old flagstone by a chariot-wheel, and there rises up before us, like a mirage, the iron age. So back and back you may be led, from trifle to trifle, till you are landed somewhere upon the threshold of the fossils. Here, in this country of grass hills, especially, you are walking over vanished populations.

> Underneath these folded downs,
> Outposts of the long-spent wave,
> Men are lying and their towns,
> All one dust and in one grave.

In short, thick turf which springs up as your foot quits it, over contours as soft and gracious as those of a woman, all that dead-and-gone history is veiled out of mind—and then in a moraine, half-buried in wild forget-me-nots, you kick

up a flat stone blued by fire, and know that a woman, in times so by-past as to belong rather to myth than story, has kept the hearth hereabout, boiled water by this means, and stirred a pot for her man's supper. And as you go, you can see her crouching there with fierce, bright, waiting eyes, her hair all about her face like curtains, a brown babe at nurse. So much will a pinch of science and a handful of imaginative sympathy do for you with a fired flint-stone.

Like tradesmen's tokens, words also, or what is left of them, preserve much lore of the evocative kind—such, for instance, as the Basque word for a knife which is the same as that for a little stone. That fact concerning the most certainly neolithic people in Europe is an interesting thing. And sure enough you may pick up such knives hereabout by the score, if you once acquire the eye for them. Whether it is worth acquiring at the price you have to pay for it may well be doubtful: for it is certain that, once you have it, you will see nothing else on your walks. There are better things than wrought flints to be seen on a bright windy day in the Wiltshire downs.

Words will tell you something, but traditions will tell you more. They survive in little gestures, little rites, turns of thought, and may be captured now and then in turns of phrase. I had one at my discretion only the other day—the survival revealed to me of a way of life, the whole packed up succinctly in a phrase.

A friend of mine, a village wife, and not a happy one, wrote to me of her affairs, and in the course of her letter referred to a sister of hers much more fortunately placed. Here is the phrase she used: 'She has a good husband,' she said, '*one that looks out for her.*' What does that do for you but take you directly back from twentieth-century

England to the scrub-grown hills and swampy bottoms of the Stone Age; from the railway and the factory-chimney and rows of working-class dwellings to the vallum and the fosse, the borstal and the mistpool? You see her (or I do) crouched over the fire, her brood swarming about her: and then you see *him*, the shaggy, broad-backed creature, relieved against the sky-line, clasped hands on his staff, his chin atop of them, scanning the hollows of the hills, as to-day you may see the cloaked shepherd with his crook. How has such a locution survived the chances and changes of this mortal life? It means something else, something slightly different now; but there it is, from Sussex, to be understood by us of Wilts, where also the old style obtains.

The husband as sentinel, the husband as watch-dog! In Lancashire, no doubt, such a phrase applied to such an one would have no connotation. There you might hear one woman say of another, 'She has a good husband, one that looks after her.' In whatever sense you take it, that's a very different thing. Whether it is New Style or not, and by London standards I should say it was rather mid-Victorian than new, it is much newer than we are in the West. The Wiltshire woman expects to look after herself and her children, but not to look out for them as well. Her husband is not there to wait upon her, that's certain. She neither wants nor expects it. It is no mark of a husband that he should be courtier. So he be provident that is all she asks. Old Style! But he must keep his eyes well open, and about. I think our women still see a possible foeman in any chance-comer on the village street. As if they were Sabines!

Vir bonus ille, bonam hanc uxorem, as the Latin primer used to demonstrate. As the good husband so the good

wife. She will spoil her children, but work her fingers raw for them. All the fond emotion pent up in her heart will spend itself on them—for to their father she will be as bleak as one flintstone chipping at another. That laconism, depend upon it, is traditional. To hear man and wife accost each other you would think they were bare acquaintances: yet the one is on the look-out, and the other toiling within doors. And they will keep good faith to each other though it was not love that brought them together, nor is love that holds them so still. Rather reason, convenience, proximity—one or any of those; and if desire there ever were, then desire of settlement. Love, I have more than once said, does follow upon use, entirely undemonstrative, inarticulate, taking everything for granted; yet sometimes passionate, always faithful, very often a beautiful and touching thing.

It is hard for an age like ours, which has come to base marriage upon sexual attraction, to realize the old-style union of which that chance-found phrase betrays the inconceivable eld. You must leave the market-place and the mill for the quieter vales of England to know and understand it. And to do that, it is not enough to be there: you must interpret as you record, for the peasant is unvocal, and can tell you little or nothing. Even when he is gifted with tongues it is rarely that he will reveal himself, or, as it were, unveil his womenkind. I don't know where you will get the hang of it better than in Carlyle's beautiful eulogy of his father, written when the old man was but newly dead. 'We had all to complain that we durst not freely love him. His heart seemed as if walled in; he had not the free means to unbosom himself. My mother owned to me that she could never understand him; that

her affection and (with all their little strifes) her admiration of him was obstructed.' Yet there came, in a time of stress, a gushing-out of the well-spring. 'It was when the remains of my mother's fever hung upon her, in 1817, and seemed to threaten the extinction of her reason. We were all of us nigh desperate, and ourselves mad. He burst at last into quite a torrent of grief, cried piteously, and threw himself on the floor, and lay moaning. . . It was as if a rock of granite had melted, and was thawing into water. . .'

Carlyle too had that stone-gripped heart. And his tragedy, and the tragedy of any one of different nation who should mate with such as he, lies in the dashing of a naked heart to pieces against that one stone-encased; and the stone conscious of the horror, and unable to utter itself!

But Carlyle, genuine peasant from the bone outwards, had another grief. *Non semper arcum!* He knew how often he had failed to keep the look-out for his wife.

J. Lackington, Bookseller

JAMES LACKINGTON was a citizen of credit and renown. He was a London bookseller, a cheap, ready-money bookseller, probably the first of his kind. In 1771 he started with five pounds' worth of stock; in 1791 he was making £4,000 a year; and in that year he published 'Memoirs of the first Forty Five Years of the Life of James Lackington, the present bookseller in Chiswell Street, Moorfields, London'. Such considerations should make his book worth reading, and on the whole they justify it. I don't say that he had his eye invariably on the object, which should have been himself. I can't deny that he has his rivals occasionally in the tail of it. There is crowing to be detected by a nice ear, and sometimes the clapping of wings. A man to read of, if he can write. Yes; but unfortunately he cannot, and what makes it worse, he feels sure that he can. He has all the faults of the unvocational writer. He is desperate to be entertaining at all events; he must be elegant, he must be funny. He peppers his pages with quotations from the poets—and such poets! he fetches up anecdotes from the deep with a dragnet. He clowns it like Smollett, has the same keen eye for the intimacies of the toilette, and the same keen nose. He confounds humour with impropriety. It is nothing to him if a woman is tipped out of a postchaise unless she show her legs, nothing that a man should get drunk unless he be inordinately sick. He disserts for chapters at a time—on

Methodism, ghosts, authorship, visits to watering-places. One has to be thankful that he spares us assorted epitaphs. His worst quality is that of the turncoat. Methodism started him, and he has nothing but scorn for it—and worse than scorn, slander. Still, when all is said, he was an honest, simple and decent-living man, who did something, and, given his time and place, something considerable. He made himself, and a tradition as well. He had to fight it out with the trade, and he beat the trade. He made a handsome income, who had begun the world as a hawker of hot pies. And Methodism put him in the way of good fortune. That he must needs allow. There was much in Methodism, but there must have been something in Lackington.

He was born at Wellington, Somerset, in 1746, the eldest of eleven children of George Lackington, journeyman shoemaker, and Joan Trott, a weaver's daughter. While he was still a child his father was found drowned in a ditch—'drunk when he died' says James; whereupon his mother, as they will, brought up her brood by working nineteen hours out of twenty-four, her food being 'chiefly broth (little better than water and oatmeal), turnips, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, &c.' For two years she screwed out twopence a week to get her James schooling at a dame's; but she could not keep it up, and moreover needed him as nurse to his brothers and sisters. So James forgot what little he had learned. At twelve the boy was selling halfpenny apple pies and halfpenny 'plumb puddings' about Wellington; then he was apprenticed to an Anabaptist shoemaker at Taunton, and shortly after that 'found religion' with the Wesleyans. James, as he says, was 'born again'; and though he sneers at it, it was true.

For he owns, without recognizing the implication, that he was thereby inspired to 'relearn to read'. He did it by moonlight, he says, no candles being allowed. In summer he was on the bench from dawn till dark, in winter from six till ten—and then read by moonlight! A boy who could teach himself anything after such hours must either get on or go under.

He became an adept in Methody, advancing by swift degrees to be one of the select bands. It is a thousand pities that his account of it all is smeared by antipathy. Enthusiasm had its inevitable reactions, no doubt; yet it is plain to be read beneath his grudging admission that it was a beacon in the pitchy dark of thousands of lives, as indeed it was in his own dark. It ran like wildfire through rural Somerset—ploughboys, dairymaids, household drudges, sweeps, wastrels, the slaves of two thousand years' tradition, all huddling, praying, dreaming, singing, calling on God together. Empty bellies and high hopes; mud floors to kneel upon, and the shining ramparts of Sion full in sight. Nearly all their worship was stolen from the night, done in the dark. Preachings were at five in the morning. James used to turn out between three and four to attend them. He didn't spend that waiting hour alone—how should he? —and if he and his companion escaped disaster, assuredly many did not. In such cold, in such dark, with such kindling, how should they? The *Agapés* were at nine or ten of the night. Danger there too, as James more than infers. He says that the votaries came to grief, many of them; that the maids were overkind. They nearly always are. Yet he has the impudence to call them 'fair tempters'. I cannot say how much I dislike James in this vein. I hate his nods and winks, his ungraciousness, his

want of charity. The fire is gone cold in him; but it is rank ingratitude not to remember the former glow, which not only urged him to read, but gave him a good girl to wife. That was 'a spiritual dairymaid' called Nancy Smith, whom he courted on and off for seven years, and married in 1770.

Before that he had not only learned, but had begun, to read; at first, he says, only 'enthusiastic authors',—those, and Pomfret's Poems, which may also have been enthusiastic, but inspire little enthusiasm in me who, I am sorry to say, know nothing about them or their Pomfret. Presently —he was in Bristol—he lit upon 'Hobbes's Homer' on a bookstall, and 'Walker's Paraphrase of Epictetus'. He found Hobbes obscure, as I dare say he was, not to say chilling, but got on excellently with Epictetus. And then he started book-buying—evidently predestined—confining himself mainly to works of edification which, then as now, were as cheap as they were abundant, and as enormous as cheap. Here are his early choices, some of them: most of Bunyan; Polhill on the Decrees; Pamble's Works (Pamble!); Erskine's Gospel Sonnets; Baxter's Shove for a heavy-a—d Christian (that popular work); The Sure Guide to Heaven; Aristotle's Masterpiece. Then, inconsequently, Gay's Fables, Paradise Lost, Plato on the Immortality of the Soul, Plutarch's Morals, Epicurus's Ditto, Confucius's Ditto. Gay seems overweighted in that company. Having these, or wanting them, he lived chiefly, he says, on bread and tea, and allowed himself three hours' sleep per diem. At Bristol he heard John Wesley preach, and George Whitefield (whom he preferred); and at Bristol, after some amorous delays with Hannah Allen, he married his Nancy Smith, and began the world with

a halfpenny in addition to what he could earn. They made four and sixpence a week between them, it seems, and lived upon it until, not surprisingly, Nancy took ill. Lackington thereupon left her with all the money he could find or collect, and went adventuring to London. He obtained work in Whitecross Street, established 'a Wesleyan connection' in six months, sent for his Nancy, and never turned back again. There was stuff in the young man.

Ten pounds under his grandfather's will set him up with furniture for one room. Then in 1774 came his chance, and he took it. A fellow journeyman told him of a little shop and parlour going in Featherstone Street, where he could be his own master. He didn't hesitate. He would be a master shoemaker, he said, and sell books too.

> 'Mr. Boyd then asked me how I came to think of selling books? I informed him that until that moment it had never once entered into my thoughts; but that when he proposed my taking the shop, it instantaneously occurred to my mind that for several months past I had observed a great increase in a certain old bookshop; and that I was persuaded I knew as much of old books as the person who kept it. I farther observed that I loved books, and that if I could but be a bookseller, I should then have plenty of books to read, which was the greatest motive I could conceive to induce me to make the attempt.'

And so it was done; and here is the 'library' with which he began to trade. Fletcher's Check to Antinomianism, 5 vols.; Watts's Improvement of the Mind; Young's Night Thoughts (he had bought that instead of a Christmas dinner); Wake's Translation of the Apostolical Epistles; Fleetwood's Life of Christ; Hinton's

Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, twenty numbers; some of Wesley's Journals; 'Pious Lives'; and some twelve volumes of 'assorted trade'—oddments. Not a promising lot, one would say, for St. Luke's, though he values it at £5, and seems to have been justified. In two years, according to him, he moved on to Chiswell Street, which he had not left at the time of writing, with his stock increased to £25 value—and that in spite of his neighbourhood. Few passed down his street, he says, 'besides Spitalfields weavers on hanging days, and methodists on preaching nights'. Among his 'oddments' may have been some catnachery, though he does not say so.

On the contrary, bookseller entire as he was now become, he dealt almost wholly in divinity, yet did well. It was the line of his connexion, and of his inclination too. 'Such was my ignorance, bigotry, superstition (call it what you will), that I conscientiously destroyed such books as fell into my hands which were written by freethinkers.' So may have perished Gay's Fables; but that did not last. He fell ill in 1775; his wife caught his fever of him, and 'contrary to all expectations died in enthusiastic rant on the 9th of November, surrounded with methodist preachers'. A sad end for his 'spiritual dairymaid' whom he seems to have loved in his plain way. A Miss Dorcas Turton took her place. He married her in 1776, thus, as he says, 'repairing the loss of one very valuable woman by the acquisition of another still more valuable'. It was not a romantic age, though the time was getting on: you acquired wives as you did books; yet Lackington seems to have been kind to both of his; and who is to judge him? Miss Turton had been a schoolmistress, and always a reader. I think she was free from 'enthusiastic rant', which, there are indications,

had encumbered poor Nancy from an early age. I trace it to the Turton influence that Lackington allowed freer play to his own mind, and began to shake off methodism. He himself attributes it to the chance that he one day 'took up the Life of John Buncle'. It is impossible, he says, 'to imagine with what eagerness and pleasure I read through the whole four volumes of this whimsical, sensible, pleasing work. It was written by Thomas Amory, Esq. (who was living in the year 1788, at the great age of 97) and I know not of any work more proper to be put in the hands of a poor, ignorant, bigoted superstitious methodist'. That 's as may be; but he 'also received great benefit from reading Coventry's Philemon to Hydaspes; it consists of dialogues on false religion, extravagant devotion, &c. in which are many very curious remarks on visionaries of various ages and sects'. Then he becomes purely professional: 'The work is complete in five parts octavo. There has also been a decent Scotch edition, published in twelves. Both editions are now rather scarce.' After those, 'rational and moderate divines of all denominations'; and once free, he scorned his late servitude, as he deemed it, and coloured his whole book with his scorn. Between that and his desire to startle, he goes so far as to print letters alleged from Wesley, which obviously Wesley had no hand in; he goes so far, in fact, as to go too far, and to become at once venomous and a bore. Luckily he writes his spleen out, and returns to the trade. In 1779, eight years after his beginning, he issued a catalogue of twelve thousand volumes—very much to the credit, surely, of St. Luke's. His second catalogue was of thirty thousand. In 1791 his sales were a hundred thousand volumes a year, and his profits, he says, £4,000.

It had been in 1780 that he had done two things which no doubt made his fortune. He established a rigid system of ready-money selling, and he undersold the trade. His account of booksellers' customs in his day is worth reading:

> 'When I was first initiated into the various manœuvres practised by booksellers I found it customary among them (which practice still continues) that when any books had not gone off so rapidly as expected or so fast as to pay for keeping them in store, they would put what remained of such articles into private sales, where only booksellers are admitted, and of them only such as were invited by having a catalogue sent them. At one of these sales I have frequently seen seventy or eighty thousand volumes sold after dinner, including books of every description, good, bad, and indifferent; by this means they were distributed through the trade.'

But that was not all:

> 'When first invited to these trade sales, I was very much surprised to learn that it was common for such as purchased remainders to *destroy* one half or three fourths of such books, and to charge the full publication price, or nearly that, for such as they kept on hand; and there was a kind of standing order amongst the trade that in case any one was known to sell articles under the publication prices, such a person was to be excluded from trade sales; so blind were copyright holders to their own interest.'

Lackington fought it out, refusing to destroy, insisting on low prices; and he won. He does not record the fortunes of the fray, though it is clear that he did not come off without a knock or two. His narration of it all is oblique, to be gathered partly from the prefaces to his book. There are three of them: the first to the Public; the second 'to that part of the numerous body of Booksellers of Great

Britain and Ireland whose conduct justly claims the additional title of Respectable'; the third 'To those sordid and malevolent Booksellers whether they resplendent dwell in stately mansions or in wretched huts of dark and grovelling obscurity.'

'I'll give every one a smart lash in my way.' He could afford, it is likely, to let it go at that. At any rate the only lashes he deigns to give them, with the exhortation, 'Read this, ye covetous wretches', are details of his abounding prosperity; and I don't know that he could by any means have found shrewder ones. In 1791, the year of publishing, he had two shops in Chiswell Street, a villa at Merton, a chariot and pair, with saddle horses in reason for Mrs. Lackington and himself; and in that year also afforded himself the proudest days of his life. His 'state of health being indifferent, and Mrs. Lackington's still worse' he decided upon a sojourn in Lyme Regis. 'Accordingly in July last, 1791, we set out from Merton where I now make my chief residence, taking Bath, Bristol, &c., in our way to my native place Wellington.

'In Bristol, Exbridge, Bridgewater, Taunton, Wellington, and other places, I amused myself in calling on some of my masters, with whom I had about twenty years before worked as a journeyman shoemaker. I addressed each with '*Pray, Sir, have you got any occasion?*' which is the term made use of by journeymen in that useful occupation, when seeking employment. Most of those honest men had quite forgot my person, as many of them had not seen me since I worked for them: so that it is not easy for you to conceive with what surprize and astonishment they gazed on me. For you must know that I had vanity (I call it *humour*) to do this in my chariot, attended by my servants; And on telling

them who I was, all appeared to be very happy to see me. And I assure you it afforded me much real pleasure to see so many of my old acquaintances alive and well, and tolerable happy. The following lines often occurred to my mind:

> Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
> Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray:
> Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
> They keep the noiseless tenor of their way.'

A thoroughly inept quotation, seeing that the complacent dog was aiming to prove them poor devils with every line of the pen: but I am not one to grudge him his hour of triumph. I think he deserved it. He was a large bookseller, a cheap bookseller, and, for aught that appears, an honest bookseller. He had made himself and was not ashamed of it. Incidentally, he was a man of courage too. He very much disliked Doctor Johnson, was not afraid to say so, and gave his reasons for it, sound ones.

A portrait (flattered, I feel sure) in my copy of him shows him a handsome, though fleshy, philanthropist, with black, prominent eyebrows under a smooth brow, and with rather a heavy jowl. He is beautifully dressed, beruffled and bepowdered. It is subscribed thus:

> *J. Lackington*
> (*who a few years since began Business*
> *with five pounds, and now sells*
> *one hundred thousand volumes*
> *annually*).

That was a lash which trade rivals could feel.

Balladry 'over the Foam'

WHEN some of our people, for reasons, exiled themselves in the *Mayflower* and other bottoms they took away among their household gear some fond imperishable stuff which was, in the most intimate way, of their own make. I don't allude to their morals, so much older than their Bibles, though they certainly took those, a contributory cause of their going. Morals, or the beginnings of them, are a more vexed question even than mine, which is Ballads and the beginnings of *them*. There have been volumes written upon that, and one would not lightly embark upon it in an essay; but except family sayings, proverbs, household words, nicknames, weather-lore, and suchlike, there can have been nothing in the *Mayflower* more deeply rooted in the hearts of the Pilgrims than their songs.

'Twas in the merry month of May
When the green buds were a swelling,
Sweet William on his death-bed lay
For the love of Barbara Allen—

Heaven knows where that can have sprung from if not from the heart of a village. Heaven alone knows, what we shall never know, the age of the like of that. For all we can tell, young men and maids may have sung it to each other in the New Stone Age. As documents only, the

Ballads are without price. Closely read, those old unhappy far-off things tell us more of the nature of our people than all the history books. For History reads the world scenically; but the ballad-singer is off the stage. The stuff of his rime is sown on the hearth, and blooms, as all poetry does, in secret; as all flowers do, in the night. So the ballads are as close to the cottage as the houseleek on the tiles, or the darnel which follows men about from garth to garth. An emigrant might conceivably leave his cat behind, but his songs are himself and could never leave him.

Nowadays, when the sound of them, their plain and plangent words, their wailing beautiful winding airs are hard to catch in the din of modern life, collectors go far afield to find them. So it is that many of our best ballads have revisited us from America. Mr. Cecil Sharp has gleaned them by fifties in the Southern Appalachians. Few of them, but a few, all the same, escaped the wide-ranging scrutiny of Professor Child. Of his 305 British Ballads the texts or fragments of eighty were recovered in the United States. I learn that from Professor Louise Pound of Nebraska, from whose *Poetic Origins and the Ballads* I take it for presentation to the reader. Only lately a kind correspondent of my own has sent me two Kentucky versions of another which had escaped the professorial eye.

Naturally they have suffered a sea-change, and in the direction you would expect. The ethos of them remains; the pathos has here and there shifted its angle of apprehension. Externally they have become democratized. The Captains and the Kings have departed; everybody steps down a degree or two. The peerage is nearly extinct. Lord Randal becomes Johnny Randal, or Jimmy. Little

Musgrave, whose title of gentry has lost all meaning, is now Little Matthew Grove—and so on. Little Sir Hugh of Lincoln, who figures oversea as Little Harry Hughes, loses also his city. Mr. Sharp tells us that the opening of that tragedy, which goes with us:

> It rains, it rains in merry Lincoln,
> It rains both great and small,

has been heard in America,

> Do rain, do rain, American corn,
> Do rain both great and small—

which is patriotic, but nonsense. As for 'The Two Brothers', it has adopted American soil as well as idiom:

> O what shall I tell your true love, John,
> If she inquires for you?
> O tell her I'm dead and lying in my grave,
> Way out in Idaho.

'Little Musgrave', one of our most romantic ballads, as the peasantry understood romance, has kept its peer, but suffered none the less one significant change. Everybody knows the tale: how Lord Barnard's wife, for love of young Musgrave, made an assignation with him, was overheard by a page-boy and betrayed to her absent lord. Lord Barnard comes home at night and finds the sinful pair. He bids Little Musgrave get up and fight, for

> It shall nere be said in my country
> I have killed a naked man.

The fight has its predestined end; then Lord Barnard kills the false lady. And then

A grave, a grave, Lord Barnard cryd,
To put these lovers in;
But lay my lady on the upper hand,
For she came of the better kin.

That last very characteristic sentiment has disappeared in Kentucky. As my correspondent says, 'Montani semper liberi'.* Class-distinctions are not effective in the art of the freeborn. Yet such is the force of language, in the Letcher county variant, the ballad still ends on the key-word 'kin'. Lord Daniel, as he is called there, duly kills 'Little Matthew Grove':

Little Matthew Grove struck the very first lick,
Lord Daniel struck the floor;
Lord Daniel took the very next lick,
Little Matthew struck no more.

'Lick' sounds to us very American, but is right old English.

But, having slain the lover, Lord Daniel is not so drastic with the lady as his prototype, Lord Barnard, was. Not so drastic, but not less cruel.

He took the lady all by the hand,
Says, Come sit on my knee.
Which of these men do you love the best,
Little Matthew Grove or me?

How do you like his rosy cheek,
How do you like his chin,
How do you like little Matthew Grove
Who now lies dead for his sin?

I find the lady's answer both spirited and touching:

Very well I like his rosy cheek,
Very well I like his chin;
Much better I love little Matthew Grove
Than you and all your kin.

An odd case of the accomodation of tradition to the demands of one imperious word.

It can no more be said of the American people than of our own that the ballad-habit has not degenerated. Professor Pound seems inclined to lay that to our account, which is unkind of her. If we had our Catnach, so did they.

> On Bowery Street I did reside,
> Where people did me know;
> I fell in love with a pretty girl,
> She proved my overthrow.

I confess that, in that case, Professor Pound traces the doggerel back to an original, English, 'Jack Williams', whose home was Chatton Street, and his jail Newgate instead of Sing Sing. But 'Betsy Brown', which, as she says, is more interesting, seems to me purely home-grown. 'A woman's son, Johnny, loves Betsy the servant. The mother takes Betsy to the seaside, where she sells her "across to Verginny". Her son dies, and the mother repents too late.' The following verse gives a taste of its quality:

> O son, O son, your love's in vain, for I've sold Betsy
> 'cross the main
> My son, my son, my son, says she, you bring scandal
> on you and me.
> I would rather see your corpse lie dead, than marry
> Betsy a servant maid.

When you come to work out the sentiment of that there seems little difference between it and Lord Barnard's claim of the upper berth for his wife's remains. But you don't look for the fine flower of democracy in a broadside.

Lastly, here is unmitigated Catnach, of no longer ago than yesterday, or the day before:

My sister came to prison to bid her last good-bye,
She threw her arms about me and wept most bitterly:
She said, My dearest brother, to-day you must die,
For the murder of James A. Garfield, upon the scafel high.

What is there about modern locutions which is so hopelessly incompatible with old forms? 'James A. Garfield' rides as uneasily in a Catnach as a bishop in an aeroplane.

A Traveller's Tale

BEING returned to the mild and pastoral West after an eight days' adventure in the energy and smoke of the North, I am moved to relate something of my journey and its fortunes, which is not at all the way of a provident traveller. He, if he has fallen upon a good thing, hoards it for his private comfort hereafter and will never impart his luck for fear somebody else may get more good out of it than he. My prompting is rather that of a man whose heart is full to overflowing of surprising and happy discovery. And if any reader of this essay should liken me to the historic soldier who was found one day beating a Jew and justified himself by explaining that it was on account of the Crucifixion, I will reply as he did that I only found it out yesterday. It is true that what moved and exhilarated me so greatly might have done so, and with better effect, long ago; but we are what we are, and my lines were cast otherwhere when I was young.

My business took me a round of official or semi-official visits to a number of inter-related communities in Lancashire and Yorkshire, brought me rather closely into intercourse with them, and confined me exclusively to their members. I moved from house to house, as my duties called me, taking as I went the hospitality which was offered me. I must have spoken to or with hundreds of men and women of every variety of social degree and opportunity, as we reckon such things down here, yet all

of them were alike in this, that their outlook and moral complexion were the same. That caused their effect upon me to be cumulative. There was nothing to minimize it, lessen its momentum or (if I may put it so) cause its impact to swerve. I will not say that I was overwhelmed, because after living an active life in all sorts of company for a certain number of years one is prepared for most things; but I can certainly say that I was uplifted; and again that I was restored to hopes which the last few years had done their wicked best to atrophy. I may even go so far as to say that no picture I could make for myself of the daily life lived long ago by certain poor men and women in Galilee could fail of resembling that of the members of the Community which received me so kindly.

I found myself then in the end to have been the guest and, as far as might be, the intimate of a people in possession of some secret store of knowledge which made them not only serene and quietly happy, but even indifferent to the rubs of the world so far as they experienced them. That of itself, with the world all about them such as I knew it to have been and had felt it to have been, was surprising enough. My own people, whom I had left behind me, were fretted to rags by six years' mowing and aftermath of war. They were poor, and hated their poverty; tired, and scorned themselves for feeling so; suspicious of each other and of their neighbours; hopeless of anything better. Who will show us any good? was their outcry; and the best of them said it with despair; and the worst with a cynical lift of the eyebrow. In the country and among the people of my sojourn there was the same poverty, taken as a matter of course. If they were tired, there were no signs of slackening. They

suspected nobody, even if he was a German. And they did not ask to be shown any good, because they could see it for themselves, and never had their eyes off it for long together. It became clear to me that this something good was a thing which every one of them carried about within himself, and sometimes I was apt to think them backward in disclosing it. But on reflection I convinced myself of one or another fact: either the good thing, whatever it was, could not be imparted and must be individually sought and found; or it was impossible of disclosure to anybody not prepared to receive it. And that may be why it was not imparted to me.

My round began at Manchester, pushed out to Liverpool, doubled back to Sheffield, crossed Yorkshire to Scarborough, went North to Darlington, brought me again to Pontefract, ended up at York; and everywhere I had the same simple geniality of reception, the same candid intercourse, found the same innocence of heart, quiet gaiety, fine temper; and in all cases an ease, a leisure of address which made of life a comfortable, prosperous thing instead of what I had been finding it of late, a journey in bare feet and corns upon a French *pavé*. I spoke just now of social standing—that was to describe something to myself which to my late acquaintance would have no meaning. To me, unfortunately, men are not equal: to them, as it seems, they cannot be unequal. Money and rank—how can they make men unequal when virtue and vice do not? I admit the reasoning; yet I must also admit that they have every appearance of doing so. *De non apparentibus et de non existentibus*—most of us put the maxim to daily use. Well, my hosts in the North did not. They used no titles of difference. Men and

women alike are known by their names. Sex is marked, but by first names alone. Age is not outwardly differenced, nor quality. The ease which this gives to intercourse, to the commerce of every day, can hardly be described; but that, of course, is by no means the whole of the matter. The implications of it, not immediately apparent, go deeply into the relations of men and women; and the greatest of those I suspect is a fundamental temperance—so fundamental indeed as to be almost an affair of instinct—which makes such delicate commerce as that of the sexes of little difficulty to them—while to us, how full of pitfalls and quicksands!

With temperance for a hand upon the passions the way is open to love; and this people can love with open heart, each other, their neighbours, their enemies, if they confessed to any. Their boys and girls can be brought up together without prejudice, afterthought, or what is worse, aftertaste. Sometimes they love each other at school, and thereafter; but they keep innocency; love is not a storm, but a spring calm; and when the summer comes to them they go back to the school of their springtime and are quietly married there. There may be unhappy marriages among them—for they are mortal. I neither saw nor heard of any, but on the contrary saw more happy couples in that week I spent among them, than I could find in London in five years. If that does not imply some great possession—innocency, temperance, inner light, call it what you will—then it implies supernatural beings. Yet they are of all people I have ever met the most natural. Incredible endowment, in an age grown old and rotten-ripe with knowledge.

It is exceedingly difficult to say what comfort resides

in life modelled upon the Sermon on the Mount, to put it no higher; yet since comfort is a thing we all want if it is to be had, it is well worth finding out. Personally, I have always believed poverty to be the secret of earthly happiness; and it is only another way of putting it, perhaps, to say, that riches may be it. It is the riches of my recent hosts which allow them their sincerity, their equality, their liberty to love, their serene indifference to the hammerings of circumstance. Knowing what they know, they can afford these things. Since they learned the secret which makes them thus rich, the time, I believe, is three hundred years. Can they not put the rest of us in the way of it?—will they not? There is need enough, God knows.

The One Thing Needful

IT is strange to reflect that the complex of misery from which the world is now suffering should be soluble by one single thing; strange that it should be true; equally strange perhaps that I should have that solution on the tip of this pen. I am not so fatuous as to pretend that I have discovered it, nor so simple as to say that I am discovering it now. Rather I am uncovering, or, if you please, recovering, it. This time last year I announced it in the public Press, having borrowed it from the Quakers, whose peculiar it is in these days. Nobody took any particular notice, so far as I know. At least, nothing happened. Therefore, being quite sure of my ground, I announce it again.

And again I take it, with an impressive testimony added, from the Quakers, who say, as they have always said, that the one paramount necessary thing for the stability and progress of man is that he should be moved to love rather than to hate his neighbour. Surprising that, having tried every form of hating that can be learned for two years long, and found his world none the better for it, man should still pursue that road to settlement. But he does. Still the editor of the *Morning Post* begins his day by wondering whom he shall denounce. Still Mrs. Partington's nephew, once a month, grates his tusk against Mr. Asquith, Lord Haldane, Sir Alfred Mond's dead and German grandfather. Still everybody who is not a Russian desires another Russian Revolution. Still, for

the sake of Unionism, Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Law make union out of the question. Mr. George cannot abide Lord Northcliffe, nor Lord Northcliffe Mr. George. Finally, as a new way of getting on with things, a foolish young man explodes like a ginger-beer bottle in the Albert Hall with suggestions for hanging Mr. Churchill on a lamp-post. It is all ridiculous enough, or it would be if it were not as mischievous as it is foolish, and useless as wicked.

For all of this the Quakers are still insisting on their remedy that men should love each other—English, Irish, German, French, Jews, Gentiles, masters, men. The remedy, it may be remarked incidentally, is Christ's remedy; and most of these people are still nominally Christians. They are not perhaps, even nominally, so Christian as they were a hundred years ago. But the Quaker point, and my point, is that, however nominally people have been Christian, they have never at any time tried Christ's remedy for more than a bare fifty years at a stretch, and for so long only some three times in the world's history. Well, the Quakers have tried it for three hundred years. It is true that they have not made much headway until lately. Now, however, it does seem that they are moving: and how far, and at what rate of speed, they are moving, may be learned from the Germans, of all people in the world: from the protagonists in the recent War upon Earth to men of Ill-Will: that unhappy people who taught Europeans how to hate and grudge, who are now reaping what they sowed in the hatred and grudges of us all. To that miserable nation the Quakers went immediately after the Armistice, and there they have remained, doing works of charity to the afflicted bodies,

and exemplifying to the afflicted spirits of fallen and broken Germany what remedy there lies in pure religion and undefiled. I have a testimony to this work of theirs before me now. I take the following from 'A Letter to the Quakers', written by the poet Wilhelm Schaefer, and published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* last July. Wilhelm Schaefer is not, he says, 'one of the Germans for whom extravagant hopes were shattered by the outcome of the war'. He was not then a Pan-German, nor is he now a Bolshevist.' On the contrary, he realizes 'that a drop of hate sticks more tenaciously than all the love in the world', and knows 'only too well that a victorious proletariat could help just as little as a victorious Germany'. On that showing he writes to the Quakers as follows:

> 'You are Christians, as we call ourselves Christians—although notwithstanding our ostensible Christianity we came into this world-war. We all know that love was the fundamental idea of Christ's teaching, but you have been able to remain faithful to this teaching in practice. Before the stroke of fate came upon us, you were among us an almost unknown sect; now your presence among us is overshadowing all the Churches. Neither the Papal Bishops nor the Protestant Superintendents have been able to keep themselves pure from the war's hatred, nor can they now point to any fundamental principle for life, as you can.'

True for you, Herr Schaefer, the Christian Churches did not commend themselves, or their Master's doctrine, remarkably from 1914 onwards. Nor are Catholic Church and Protestant Church in Ireland distinguishing themselves very Christianly now. There, at least, in the very vortex of the maelstrom of world-hatred, is testimony to the one

Christian Society which declares the one needful thing. Here is another, again from the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, from Herr Alfons Paquet; 'We do not know,' he says, 'whether in some ways the Quaker Embassies which have settled in the chief cities in Europe may not become more important for world-peace than the official Embassies sent out by Governments with their costly and somewhat outworn machinery'. He blurs his enthusiasm by his 'somewhats' and 'in some ways', and is put in the shade by the poet, with whom I agree in seeing no possible qualification. If it is Swarthmore against the Foreign Office, there can be no doubt on which side to rank.' It is a question of a human or a conventional relationship. Whatever hereafter may come forth of the Foreign Office, you may be sure it will not be the Sermon on the Mount.

Is it suggested here that the League of Nations has received at least the countenance of the Foreign Office? Be it so; and a word upon that. There is a tacit understanding, it would seem, in the Press solemnly to accept the League of Nations on its face value, solemnly to take for granted that it means something when in fact it means precisely nothing. Such a line of conduct, even if it proceed from mere vacuity of mind, is highly mischievous, because it wastes time. Side by side with the discussions at Geneva armaments are piling up again. The United States has its programme, Japan has its programme, *The Times* is filled every day with the bickerings of naval officers over the best preparations for the next war. The chemists are stooping over their toxic gases, their high explosives. And all this while it is obvious to whoever thinks for a moment of the last war what in logical extension the next one must be. It will be upon a scale which defies thought; it

must be a thing which civilization cannot survive. Yet just as certainly as the rival shipbuilding of England and Germany, the rival army extensions of Germany and France, induced the last war, so can these preparations have but one end. Let me point out one aspect of that end. *It is now accepted doctrine that war must be waged against non-combatants*; from overhead, from gas-retorts. Against this end the League of Nations as it stands cannot afford any protection, for it contains in its constitution the germ of all wars—that is to say, the principle of nationality. Every war from the beginning of time has arisen out of the suspicions, or the envy, or the susceptibilities of nation and nation. Emphasize, perpetuate nationality, you prepare warfare.

What then? Has the world gone mad? Or is it so grafted in a stock of Ill-Will that it cannot help itself? There is only one thing that will help it. Man must learn to love instead of hate.

Years ago, say the Quakers, the palpable, breathing Essence of divine and human love walked this earth, and expressed itself there in the person of Jesus Christ. How literally they believe that, or intend us to take it, does not matter. If they are no more literal than the lover who believes that Beauty divine and human walks incarnate in his beloved, that is literal enough for all purposes. When I read Saint Matthew I believe them; but when I read the *Morning Post* I find it much more difficult. I suggest then, once more, to my fellow men that they try Saint Matthew's and the Quaker specific for their sorrows They have never tried it yet—and who knows whether it may not be true?

The Remnant

THE *Westminster Gazette*, in a leading article written with a pen less broad than its ordinary, contemplates a 'death-sentence' on our British greatness which it bases upon the probability that, to live at all, 'we must live as a self-contained island'. To live so, it says, 'a preliminary will be the reduction of our population to one-half and the acceptance by the remainder of a standard of life lower than we have known for generations'. That is what the *Westminster* believes the British people will not accept.

The answer to that, of course, is that if the population is so reduced, and if the means of subsistence are such as to exact a lowered standard, the British people will have to accept them. Needs must when the devil drives! But is the devil driving? Is it possible that Providence holds the ribbons? Is it possible that if the thing became an affair of choice the British people might vote for self-continence? Not, I agree, in the mood in which the main of them are to-day. But we are considering rather to-morrow; and some such choice seems to me the one hope for British greatness to-morrow. If it is desired that I explain myself, that is my desire also. But first I should examine the *Westminster*'s premiss. Is there a chance that the population and subsistence of our island will be sensibly reduced? According to the highest financial advice I can command there is more than a chance.

Two attacks are at this hour being directed against Capital. The frontal attack is Labour's. Labour wants to sweep it away. What it is proposed to substitute for it, I am not clear; but it is certain that the attack is both spirited and determined, and, so far, successful. Outlying positions have been surrendered, others carried and held. Others, notably the railway-position, are threatened. The advance is sufficiently vigorous to cause commotion in the defending host. That is clear enough; one only has to read *The Times*. But the attack in flank, which is the Government's, is even more serious. The Government, being unable to stop spending, must by all means have money, first to placate its enemies, secondly to pay its debts. It has abandoned Excess Profits Duty, chiefly because there seemed to be no excess profits available. So far as can be seen it must now increase the super-tax on income, make a capital levy, or default upon its obligations. If it elects one of the first two expedients it will shake Capital to the core; if it chooses for the last it will ruin us all. What then is Capital to do but to retreat? And that is what it is doing now. It will withdraw oversea and leave us alone. It will leave but a remnant of the population behind it; for with it must depart those who live upon it, all the industrial workmen who, whatever they may think or say, cannot do without it—unless, of course, they seize the assets of the State and put them into their business; and they are unlikely to do that because, if the country is bankrupt, the assets available won't be worth the taking. If there is anything at all in all this, the supposititious shrinking of the population dreaded by the *Westminster* is likely to be actual.

Of what, of whom, will the remnant consist? Of

those, firstly, so rooted in the soil of this England that they cannot be torn out of it: our agricultural, fishing, seafaring, small-trading population, the first here, the last to go, the soundest, healthiest, steadiest, most laborious, most patient of our nation. They will be, as they have generally been, the nucleus. Others will be added to whom the call of tradition, ancestry, association, and what we know as the heartstrings, outvails that of luxury and ease; others again who have religious, sentimental, philosophical inklings of the blessings of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Many of the adventurous will remain to probe a new life which cannot fail of adventure, and of much more adventure than the old; for when you have everything there is nothing to get; and when you have nothing there is everything. Scientists, artists, men of letters (but not 'best-sellers'); clergymen, lawyers, doctors,—all of these: in fine, any class of men to which, when leisure of mind is in the balance, easy money is not the prime good. There 's for the remnant.

The remnant will make the best of it, in the absence of what the *Westminster* calls 'our greatness as a nation'. Is it possible that the *Westminster* has fallen into the common confusion of 'greatness' with 'bigness'? I fear that it has, for I cannot for the life of me see how a people can lose greatness by becoming a small nation, or in what possible sense the moral quality of the British is diminished by the positive loss of India, Egypt, Cyprus, Malta, Gibraltar, Hong-Kong, St. Helena, and some West Indian islands, by the titular loss of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, or by the abandonment of pleasantly termed 'mandates'—'convey the wise it call'—over Mesopotamia and Palestine. You may say that if it was

'greatness' which acquired those regions, it is 'smallness' to lose them. Well, I don't know about that. One would have to inquire rather particularly into the details of our acquisition before one could decide such a question; and it might possibly transpire that the acquisition, province by province, of India was less morally 'great' than its restitution, province by province, would be. But that is ethics. We will leave that to the schoolmen. It is more pertinent to inquire just now whether the retention of those Asiatic and other possessions would be a profit or loss to a reduced and poor population. I shrewdly suspect that at this moment every single one of them is a dead loss. If so, or if only yielding a narrow margin of profit, it is then certain that a bankrupt Britain with half its present population not only could not afford, but would not be able, to keep them.

Then we should stand clear, to face the world and our creditors, to pay our debts, I hope, out of the vast economies we should be able to make. We should have neither army nor navy. We should carry, as we once did, and as the Dutch and Norwegians have done for three centuries, without a guaranteed passage. We should be self-contained, self-sufficient: we should fish, we should plough, we should graze our sheep and cattle, we should take in each other's washing. We should not fear invasion, for the possible loot would not be tempting enough; we should not want more than a small militia for policing the land and the home-waters, for the same reason. There would be such a chance then for our national 'greatness' as it has not had since Queen Elizabeth lived and died; and if those spacious days do not begin all over again; and if five hundred years hence some man of letters from a green shade is not

writing in precisely this strain, and to the same end—then I wholly misread the greatness of my nation.

Il faut cultiver notre jardin was Candide's conclusion, and it is mine. We shall have time for that in a few years from now. And time to be great rather than big. And then—if contentment is anything to the matter—we may perhaps be happy.

Queen Victoria

THE crisp malicious touch which made *Eminent Victorians* highly contentious matter to some of his readers has not deserted Mr. Strachey; but he has tempered it very materially in his essay upon the most eminent Victorian of them all. For more than half of his second book his attitude to his subject is that of his first; and I don't pretend to say that I like it, while I admit that its irony and sub-acid wit amuse me a great deal. But it is too Olympian to be pleasant; as it belittles the victim, so it exalts the performer with the knife, until inexorable Nemesis appears upon the scene of the operating-theatre and convinces you that no one but a very young man could be so remarkably superior. Towards the end, however, Mr. Strachey is himself convinced that he is dealing with great matter. Coming, I believe, to scoff, he remains to praise. The last pages of the essay are serious and beautiful, the last paragraph as evocative as poetry.

That great lady, subject of Mr. Strachey's pungent and suggestive monograph, was more than a symbol: she was an emblem. It was her official business to stand as the outward and visible sign of the British Empire; it was perhaps more than such an accident that fated her to be the thing signified by Victorianism. But more than that, she may show forth to the ages to come nearly everything—the whole at least of its moral outfit—which we connote in the phrase 'Nineteenth Century'. With her it began, with her it ended. What had passed before 1837 was the

fag-end of another age, the age of circumscribed interests, short views, of hedonism and scepticism, of surface glitter, and fundamental coarseness. With Victoria's accession, all that disappeared, nobody can tell precisely how, or when, or why. Life was real again, life was earnest; up went the banner of the ideal: what was called the 'Condition of England Question' became a perpetual itch. Lord Melbourne left off drinking, and very nearly left off swearing; the Duke of Wellington slipped into fogeydom; Peel broke down the Corn Laws. It must have been her doing; there was nobody else who could have done it. And yet—explain it how you will—the little great lady herself was as true a daughter of the eighteenth century as Lady Holland. There 's a paradox; and here 's another—herself: a Whig, and yet as staunch for the prerogative as George III; pious, and yet so rank an Erastian that she considered herself, as Mr. Strachey says, head of every church represented in her Empire, and entitled to regulate one and all of them. That is all true: she was from the beginning to the end a bundle of opposites; and Mr. Strachey never loses sight of it. Who would have believed that the little round-faced girl of eighteen, with her parted ingenuous lips and blue eyes, meekly under the thumb of her German mother until the eve of June the twentieth, would before noon on that eventful day quietly put the Duchess in her place? But it seems that she did it. Up to the moment of her going in to the Privy Council she had practically never been alone in her life. But when she came out

> 'and found her mother waiting for her, she said, "And now, Mamma, am I really and truly Queen?" "You see, my dear, that it is so." "Then, dear Mamma, I hope you will grant me the first request

I make to you, as Queen. Let me be by myself for an hour." For an hour she remained in solitude. Then she reappeared, and gave a significant order: her bed was to be moved out of her mother's room. It was the doom of the Duchess of Kent'.

Se non è vero, it ought to be.[1] It is admirably put, and in substance at least perfectly true. She could do that, and more, for as she disposed of her mother so she quenched the hopes and quelled the high spirits of her Uncle Leopold, and so she dared even greater than he. 'Le Roi Georges en jupons', was said of her as a child of six, and so she grew up to be, within and without, except that she was never clownish, never in the least the buffoon. Her dignity is admitted by everybody who ever had to do with her. When Eugénie, Empress of the French, was by her side it was Victoria who drew all eyes, 'very short, rather stout, quite plain, in garish middle-class garments'—

'She was Queen of England, and was not that enough? It certainly seemed to be; true majesty was hers, and she knew it. More than once when the two were together in public, it was the woman to whom, as it seemed, nature and art had given so little, who, by sheer force of an inherent grandeur, completely threw her adorned and beautiful companion in the shade'.

She had enchanted old Melbourne as a girl, and enchanted old Disraeli, herself an elderly woman. She inspired terror in her eldest son, and was probably the only person in Europe whom her grandson of Prussia really respected. But in

[1] The authority cited for this plausible tale is not so good as it might be. With all respect to the late Mrs. Crawford, she had no pretensions to be a Greville. I have not seen her book; but I understand that she lived most of her life in Paris, remotely enough from Kensington Palace and 1837.

her ineradicable pride, in her jealousy of her prerogative, in her narrowness of view and obstinacy, in her insensibility to art and letters or the intellectual life—in all this, as well as in her pious and decent domestic habit, she was Farmer George all over again: 'living symbol', says Mr. Strachey with truth, 'of the victory of the middle-classes'. Very early in her reign she declared herself. The famous question of the Household arose in 1839. In that she faced and beat Peel, faced and beat the Duke of Wellington: more than that, she beat the setting and the rising Cabinets, and dared a conflict with Parliament itself. All that, and a bad mistake, for which Lord Melbourne was responsible, brought over her a cold wave of unpopularity within two years of her accession. 'Mrs. Melbourne', the mob called after her; and she was hissed at Ascot. But she had her own way.

Nevertheless—the paradox she was—in spite of her self-sufficiency and rooted pride, she depended from first to last upon some man or another. First of them were the ministers, Melbourne and Peel. Mr. Strachey's portrait of the former is humorous and exact, one of his very best, but he does less than justice to the much greater man. The Queen, when it came about that she must needs receive him, learned how to value him. Next came the Prince, and very soon no other man existed in her estimation. He is decidedly Mr. Strachey's best study. It was time that reasonable treatment should be given to the steady, capable, serious German gentleman whom Carlyle, with the right word as usual, found 'solid', but Tennyson, his emotions getting the better of him, portrayed either as transparent, with no inside at all, a kind of Crystal Palace of a gentleman; or as an inside and nothing else recognizable, a mere

disembodied virtue—according as you look at *Idylls of the King*. Mr. Strachey's two or three chapters upon him are perspicacious and sympathetic, as serious and sincere as the Prince was himself. Little as the English liked, or understood, or cared to understand him, he was making way when his career of statesman and father was cut prematurely short —so much way that there 's no saying where we might have been if he had lived, say, to 1870. More involved in Prussianism than would have been convenient, no doubt. He was indeed a solid man, a little more of whose German seriousness would have done us no harm. Mr. Strachey thinks that he was bored, and I don't doubt it—at first. When he had felt his feet on hard ground, when he had begun to be useful, above all when his children were coming out of the nursery, I can imagine him happy enough in his quiet way. The triviality of the Queen's leisure hours must certainly have chafed him : intellectual activity was never the strong side of the dynasty. He had to make the best of it.

> 'He had given up his double chess! And so there could be round games at the round table, or everyone could spend the evening in the most amusing way imaginable—spinning counters and rings.'

So says Mr. Strachey in his sub-acid way. The Prince scorned this kind of fun; scorned all English pursuits; looked bleakly out and about him. Well, of course he did: a good specimen himself of the most serious nation in Europe confronted with the cream of the most frivolous of them. He was naturally reserved, and sensitive withal. No one knew better than he that we distrusted foreigners *en bloc*, and him, as a king *in petto*, above all. But he got to work by degrees, reformed the Royal Household, built the

Crystal Palace, established Osborne, became the Queen's private secretary and, before he died, built Balmoral. That was a castle after his own heart—

> 'built of granite in the Scotch baronial style, with a tower 100 feet high, and minor turrets and castellated gables. . . . The walls and floors were of pitch-pine, and covered with specially manufactured tartans. The Balmoral Tartan, in red and grey, designed by the Prince, and the Victoria Tartan, with a white stripe, designed by the Queen, were to be seen in every room: there were Tartan curtains and Tartan chair-covers, and even Tartan linoleums. . . . In an alcove in the hall stood a life-sized statue of Albert in Highland dress'.

It is almost as Pharisaic to quote that as it was to write it; yet impossible to help thanking God that one has neither designed nor been fated to live in such a castle. All the same, the painful fatuity is touching—and also, what are the odds in the matter so long as you are happy? In spite of Mr. Strachey I believe that the excellent man was happy during his last years, building his castle and hanging his tartans.

After his death there followed a temporary eclipse. The Queen gave way to her grief and withdrew herself—too much. Mr. Strachey is quite right in saying that a strong wave of republicanism beset the seventies. That, however, was as much due to the too public performances of the Prince of Wales as to the too private ones of his mother. He does not mention what public event it was which saved the two of them. I don't myself doubt that it was the dangerous illness of Albert Edward and the Queen's painful anxiety and public thanksgiving. Last came the day of Disraeli and his doting adulation of 'the Faery' (how

like him are both name and spelling!). Doting is the adjective; for what began as flattery of the Queen ended in flattery of the flatterer. It did harm to the Queen with the public, and no good at all to the State. But when it was over there was an end of her dependence on men. From 1887 to the end she reigned easily and unapproachably. She made no mistakes, she filled the scene, recovered all her lost ground. It is not too much to say, as Mr. Strachey says, that when she lay on her last bed, 'It appeared as if some monstrous reversal of the course of nature was about to take place'.

The last sentence of this able book is poetry, and I must find room for it somehow. Mr. Strachey pictures Victoria lying speechless and stricken, her long life floating before her consciousness like hurrying clouds:

> 'Perhaps her fading mind called up once more the shadows of the past to float before it, and retraced, for the last time, the vanished visions of that long history—passing back and back, through the cloud of years, to older and ever older memories—to the spring woods at Osborne, so full of primroses for Lord Beaconsfield—to Lord Palmerston's queer clothes and high demeanour, and Albert's first stag at Balmoral . . . and Lord M. dreaming at Windsor with the rooks cawing in the elm-trees, and the Archbishop of Canterbury on his knees in the dawn, and the old King's turkey-cock ejaculations, and Uncle Leopold's soft voice at Claremont, and Lehzen with the globes, and her mother's feathers sweeping down towards her, and a great old repeater-watch of her father's in its tortoise-shell case, and a yellow rug, and some friendly flounces of sprigged muslin, and the trees and the grass at Kensington'.

On Translating Dante

MANY years ago—spare me the tale of them—the Poet Laureate, who was writing that essay on Keats which remains the most temperate and fundamental study ever published of the wonderful young man, did me the honour of making me in some sense accessory. He asked me to look for traces of Dante in *Hyperion*, knowing that at the time of its revision Keats had been studying him. Looking for lines where suggestion and implication were closely interwoven, I picked out some, most of which I have forgotten, but remember two. One was:

> No poison gender'd in close monkish cell,
> To thin the scarlet conclave of old men,

where the first line is pure Keats, but the second very Dantesque; and the other:

> All else who find a haven in the world,
> . . . . . .
> If by a chance into this fane they come,
> *Rot on the pavement where thou rottedst half.*

The terseness, the savage direction, and the indifference to any rendering of the fact, given the right emphasis of it, are Dante all over, as I think. Mr. Bridges's own selections are as plain, and one of them even plainer than mine:

> High prophetess, said I, purge off,
> Benign, if so it please thee, my mind's film.

That is certainly Dante—and bad Dante; but this is beautiful:

> When in mid-way the sickening east-wind
> Shifts sudden to the South, *the small warm rain*
> *Melts out the frozen incense* from all flowers.

There Keats came close to Dante in his excellence where no poet but Homer has ever beaten him, though Tennyson, who studied allusive description all his life long, sometimes came near it.

> As on a dull day in an ocean cave
> The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall
> In silence—

That is very near Dante; and there are others. But Dante can go much higher than that: he can give you in a single word scenes which depend upon the touching of a heart-string. Of them, perhaps, the supreme example is Nazareth:

> Nazzarette,
> Là dove Gabriello aperse l' ali—

a touch masterful and exquisite at once. To come within the ambit of that you must go again to Keats; to

> Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
> Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
> She stood in tears amid the alien corn—

though he takes two lines to the master's one. But when Dante to his allusiveness and felicity can add eloquence, as in—

> Piovean di fuoco dilatate falde,
> Come di neve in alpe senza vento;

or in—

> La bocca mi baciò tutto tremante:
> Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse:
> Quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante;

or in—

> Poscia, più che 'l dolor, potè 'l digiuno—

he seems to me so firmly rooted on a twin peak of Parnassus (with Homer immovable on the other) that no poet who was not an Italian or a Greek could ever expect to dislodge him.

It is just there that you come brusquely against the sharp edge of translation, where, if you have any ear at all, you will be cut off in the very bud of your endeavour. Neither French nor English can afford such vowel-sounds, nor English at least afford the dissyllabic rimes, which, be it observed, can be as lengthy or as crisp as you will. See, for instance, in the first two of the verses just cited, the difference in speed of their decisive endings. *In alpe senza vento*: that can hardly be too drawn-out. *Non vi leggemmo avante*: that ends with a slam, the phrase really closing down on *ant*, and the final syllable nothing more than a hissed aspirate. We can slam in English, none better; and poets of other tongues may well envy us our terrific arsenal of monosyllables. 'That day we read no more' will do well enough for the second phrase, if only you can compass your other two rimes in 'ore'. Byron boggled it badly when he chose that particular terzet for a set of feminine endings, and found himself forced into such a banality as:

> That day no further leaf we did uncover—

as if any one out of a translation ever did uncover any leaf

of any book. But worse than that, he missed the whole tremendous finality of *avante* by an unfortunate necessity which he had done better to avoid by any circuit, however wide.

I must lay down an axiom, I think, that no translation of Dante can pretend to be adequate which does not render him in *terza rima*. Matthew Arnold, if I remember, pretended the same necessity for translations of Homer, and with sound reasons behind him. I can therefore leave out Cary with all the blank-versifiers, and Dr. Shadwell with his Marvellisms. But even so the troubles of the translator cannot be confined within the high moral limits which Arnold reared about Homer. To Dante must be added two more difficulties inherent in his metre: those of pace and rime; and one more inherent in his language. All three of them interconnect; for, as I have said, the double-endings have the power of quickening and retarding the pace at will; and the fact that Italian is rich in polysyllabic words forces the poet to pack his lines, and 'to load his rifts with ore'. If, then, we attempt to render Dante in five-beat *terza rima*, we are deprived of pace by at least two defects—the first that we cannot find feminine rimes enough, and the second that we are forced to choke up our lines with auxiliary verbs, conjugational prepositions, articles and what-not with which the Italian can mainly dispense. Nevertheless, as we shall see, so rich are we in monosyllables, in practice the five-beat line is nearly always too long for what Dante puts into his, and we are forced to fill it out with redundancies and augmentations which in nine cases out of ten weaken the effect we aim at. One other wealth the Italian enjoys—an abundance of liquid consonants, by whose means extra syllables can be

run into the line without dislocation, which serve to ripple without hindering the pace. Take this, e. g.:

Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo Figlio
(*Par.* xxxiii, 1.)

and compare with it:

Thow mayde and mooder, doghter of thy sone:

there Dante is able to endow his line with three extra syllables without at all retarding the flow of his invocation. Chaucer, who is speedy enough, must in that line go without the enhancing. But not always. I believe that Chaucer does a better copy out of Dante than any other English poet has yet done, nearer at least to the spirit of Dante's prosody (as he was nearer to Dante's own spirit): and that although he rejected *terza rima* altogether, and did not trouble himself to be literal. Judge him by his first stanza:

Thow mayde and mooder, doghter of thy sone,
Thow welle of mercy, synful soulè's cure,
In whom that God, for bountee, chees to wone,
Thow humble, and heigh over every creature,
Thou noblèdest so ferforth oure nature,
That no desdeyn the Makere hadde of kynde
His sone in blood and flessh to clothe and wynde.
(*Second Nun's Tale*, 36 seq.)

In his fourth line, you will see, he picks up all the enrichment of liquid redundancies which he lost in his first. Well, we of to-day can never regain the advantages which Chaucer had—advantages as much of the flesh, so to speak, as of the spirit of his verse. For the spirit, sufficient to remember the limpidity of belief; for texture, the elasticity of a language which gave him 'soulès', if he

wanted it, and 'noblèdest', two or three syllables, which he could shorten when he pleased. And then he could use 'wone' without going to Wardour Street to buy it.

Shelley's copy is much better than Byron's (which is extremely bad), though it is loose as translation, and as a rendering, I think, both too slow and too slack. He manages his rimes without undue force, some of them with a beautiful ease and simplicity—such as that of the matin birds, which

> With perfect joy received the early day,
> Singing within the glancing leaves, whose sound
> Kept a low burden to their roundelay.

He has taken the first fifty lines of the 28th Purgatorio, which describe the Earthly Paradise, and Matilda there, gathering flowers. These are the first three terzets:

> And earnest to explore within—around—
> The divine wood, whose thick green living woof
> Tempered the young day to the sight—I wound
> Up the green slope, beneath the forest's roof,
> With slow, soft steps leaving the mountain's steep,
> And sought those inmost labyrinths, motion-proof
> Against the air, that in the stillness deep
> And solemn struck upon my forehead bare,
> The slow, soft stroke of a continuous. . . .

Exactly! Where would he get a rime? He was dished; and, if he had persevered with the thing, would have been forced into a new scheme. The whole thing is doubtless a draft. He would not have left 'slow, soft steps' in one stanza and 'slow, soft stroke' in the next. But 'motion-proof' is the only forced rime in the nine lines; and he improves as he goes on. Inevitably, as I have explained, Shelley has to fill out his lines with imported ore. In

line 2 he has four adjectives to Dante's three; and in the last terzet a number of them where Dante has scarcely any. For pace, it must be compared with the original; so for spontaneity, so for succinctness of expression. Dante's is all agog for adventure. Shelley's is perfunctory, almost languid. It is a copy of verses. Chaucer's is anything but that.

There is a reason for much of that, which is that the line is too long for us. Any translation, on those terms, will appear slack and loose-limbed. I have, myself, always believed that to pack the line as closely as Dante does, and to get the pace out of it which is impossible in a five-beat line without weak endings, it would answer us to render Dante's five-footer by our four-footer. That, to begin with, would make packing necessary. Also the pace would be mended. When I was writing a road-book of Tuscany, and had to quote freely from the *Commedia*, I rendered him so as I wanted him. I have only scraps to show for it, but they may be better than nothing as a foreshadowing of what a better poet than I could do with that measure.[1] Take, for example,

[1] Whether he was better or worse, I ought to say that Count Taaffe, that expansive Pisan friend of Byron and the Shelleys, whom they called False Taaffe, for obvious reasons, put forth in 1822 a 'Comment on the Divine Comedy', with specimens of a translation of the *Inferno* in octosyllabic *terza rima*. Of this it may be sufficient to quote one line:

I Mantuan, capering, squalid, squalling.

'There', says Byron, 'is all alliteration and inversion enough, surely! I have advised him to frontispiece his book with his own head, *Capo di Traditore*, "the head of a traitor"; then will come the title-page comment—Hell!' I have not succeeded in finding that line, however. Byron was very capable of inventing it.

Noi eravam lunghesso il mare ancora,
Come gente che pensa a suo cammino,
Che va col core, e col corpo dimora . . .
(*Purg.* ii. 10.)

That went—

So stayed we in that sea-bound spot,
Like folk who, thinking of the march,
Are all for going, yet go not.

Or for—

Vassi in Sanlèo, e discendesi in Noli;
Montasi su Bismantova in cacume
Con esso i piè . . .
(*Purg.* iv. 25.)

try—

To Sanlèo up, to Noli down,
To steep Bismantova you must climb
On your two feet . . .

Then Pier delle Vigne:

Io son colui che tenni ambo le chiavi
Del cor di Federico, e che le volsi
Serrando e disserrando sì soavi,
Che dal secreto suo quasi ogni uom tolsi.
(*Inf.* xiii. 58.)

the last line of which needs some skilful packing; but

I am that one who held both keys
Of Frederick's heart, which I dispensed,
Opening and shutting with such ease,
There was no man but found it fenced,

seems to me to be pretty well. To go on with Pier, here is a serried verse which I think the four-footer can tackle:

L' animo mio per disdegnoso gusto,
Credendo col morir fuggir disdegno,
Ingiusto fece me contra me giusto—

In English:

My spirit, driven by scornful gust
To ease in death the sting of scorn,
To my just self made me unjust.

Dilution must have been the result of putting that into five feet, since everything is there in four, and the pace maintained. Lastly, I will put forward a rather longer stretch, from the 16th *Paradiso*, where Cacciaguida is moralizing on cities in decay:

Se tu riguardi Luni ed Urbisaglia
Come son ite, e come se ne vanno
Diretro ad esse Chiusi e Sinigaglia:
Udir come le schiatte si disfanno,
Non ti parrà nuova cosa nè forte,
Poscia che le cittadi termine hanno.
Le vostre cose tutte hanno lor morte,
Sì come voi; ma celasi in alcuna
Che dura molto, e le vite son corte.
E come il volger del ciel della luna
Copre e discopre i liti senza posa,
Così fa di Fiorenza la fortuna;
Perchè non dee parer mirabil cosa
Ciò ch' io dirò degli alti Fiorentini
Onde la fama nel tempo è nascosa;

which one has a shot at, like this:

See Luni, Urbisaglia pass,
And after them how flicker and fade
Chiusi and Sinigaglia—alas!
When this house makes that house a shade,
There's no new thing nor hard in this,
That cities wreck the state they made!
To all your gear a term there is
Even as to you; but yours is soon,
And a town's death-bed what man sees?

Lo, as the wheeling arc of the moon
Bares or engulphs the fretted coast,
So waxes, wanes of Florence the rune;
Nor deem it marvel if I boast
Deeds of those great old Florentines
Whose ancient fame's forgotten and lost.

Even so, I have to own to two words to his one: 'flicker and fade', 'waxes, wanes', 'great old', 'forgotten and lost'. So much must one pay for a monosyllabic language.

There are marvels of beauty in the *Commedia*, scrolls of terror and horror, with which I have never felt myself able to deal. One is what one is, and must bow to the catechismal decree. Such a passage as that which begins

Li ruscelletti che dei verdi colli

is unapproachable by my English. That noble scene of the gathering of rain in the mountains—who that has ever witnessed it can forget it, or fail to find it here?—

Indi la valle, come il dì fu spento,
Da Pratomagno al Gran Giogo coperse
Di nebbia, e il ciel di sopra fece intento.

That is true: and having read it, let the reader render it if he has the courage.

The one English poet, after Chaucer, who could have given Dante in our tongue, and to his readers a lively sense of Dante's genius, was Dante Rossetti. He did no more than the Francesca episode—than which there is nothing better in English, and the seven lines consecrated to La Pia. These are what translation should be; the idioms interpenetrate; you may read here an Italian in English. It remains to be observed, however, that

Rossetti has chosen two episodes peculiarly sympathetic to himself: therefore, as not all of Dante lies in the *Commedia*, and I cannot quit the matter without a remembrance of Rossetti, let me close with something from the mystical, rapt, and, *con rispetto parlando*, slightly ridiculous Dante of the *Vita Nuova*. All lovers are slightly ridiculous, and if they are good ones glory in it. Dante Rossetti, always in love with love, and consequently with anybody's mistress, dead or alive, at a moment's notice, turned the *Vita Nuova* (one of the highest compliments ever paid to a lady) into an English love-poem. How original he was, how close to his original at the same time, one specimen must suffice me to demonstrate. I take the following stanza from the canzone, *Donna pietosa e di novella etate*, and will give Rossetti first, asking the reader to compare the two pieces, and to observe how the genius of English, perhaps in spite of the poets, has heightened the effect of the Tuscan. The stanza describes the skyey and other portents which attended the death of Beatrice:

Then saw I many broken hinted sights
In the uncertain state I stepp'd into.
  Meseem'd to be I know not in what place,
Where ladies through the streets, like mournful lights,
  Ran with loose hair, and eyes that frighten'd you,
  By their own terror, and a pale amaze:
  The while, little by little, as I thought,
The sun ceas'd, and the stars began to gather,
And each wept at the other;
And birds dropp'd in mid-flight out of the sky;
And earth shook suddenly;
  And I was 'ware of one, hoarse and tired out,
Who asked of me: 'Hast thou not heard it said? . . .
Thy lady, she that was so fair, is dead!'

Follows the original:—

Poi vidi cose dubitose molte
nel vano immaginare, ov' io entrai;
ed esser mi parea non so in qual loco,
e veder donne andar per via disciolte,
qual lagrimando, e qual traendo guai,
che di tristizia saettavan foco.
Poi mi parve vedere appoco appoco
turbar lo Sole ed apparir la stella,
e pianger egli ed ella;
cader gli augelli volando per l' a're,
e la terra tremare;
ed uom m' apparve scolorito e fioco,
dicendomi: Che fai? non sai novella?
Morta è la donna tua, ch' era sì bella.

Rossetti has taken liberties, whose beauty justifies them, I think: 'broken hinted sights' is stronger than *cose dubitose*; *donne disciolte* is enhanced by the particularity of 'loose hair'; I forgive 'eyes that frighten'd you'. The force of the strong verb 'saettavan' is lost; but against that, how beautiful is 'And each wept at the other'! Lastly, consider if

And birds dropp'd in mid-flight out of the sky;
And earth shook suddenly

be not more impressive than the more languid polysyllables of

Cader gli augelli volando per l' a're,
e la terra tremare.

It certainly seems so to me.

In the hands of a divinely appointed translator, therefore, it seems to me that you would gain as much as you would lose by the monosyllabic quality of English, provided that you used the shorter line. I see no other way of preserving

the pace of *terza rima*. But that matter must be left in the air.

I am sorry that I cannot complete my specimens with one from Hayley, who, in an essay upon Epic Poetry, put forth the first three cantos of the *Inferno* in Dante's metre. Southey praised them at the expense of everything else Hayley had done. I am afraid that was the only way of praising them. Yet I don't see how they could possibly have been worse than Byron's.

Select Conversations with a Blackbird

I

I HAD known him, of course, for some years. We were as friendly as any one can expect to be with a blackbird; always passed the time of day when we met, and so on. But we never became what you could call really intimate until a week or so ago. Coming upon him then on the croquet-lawn, disengaged and seemingly in an open humour, I went and sat down near him, asking him how he did.

His eye twinkled, and he flicked his tail up briskly. 'Well', he said, 'purely well. After life's fitful fever ... We have got over the worst of it, I hope. She has settled down now—to six. Pretty good, we think. But the weather has been all against her. To-day, I assure you, is the first easy, as you may say, which I have had since the Day.'

'Fourteenth of February?'

'That's right,' he said. 'We date from that.'

He had, at the moment, the intent, sidelong regard of the turf beneath him which I knew well. Very shortly he was deeply engaged in a momentous life-and-death kind of affair which made conversation impossible: and it was not until he had temporarily bestowed the spoils of victory that I ventured to resume.

We got talking about Mr. Eliot Howard's book on

Bird-Territory. He had not heard of it, but was interested —or polite enough to seem so—in what I had to say about it.

'Well, of course!' he said. 'Territory? Yes, indeed we have territory.' Here he cast his eye lightly over the stretch of green grass which I knew for his. 'Haven't you?'

I said that we had, the lucky ones amongst us.

'And I suppose that you arrange your little affairs, matrimonial and so on, upon the scale of your belongings?'

I pointed out a distinction between my nation's practice and what Mr. Howard reported of his. 'With us', I said, 'the funded man alone has complete freedom of choice. He can claim the girl of his heart, whatever her walk in life. It is the landless man who will choose a woman of property—chiefly because he must. He sighs as a lover; he obeys as a man of sense.'

That set my friend chuckling. 'Excuse my smiling,' he said. 'Your Mr. Howard will have instructed you better than that, no doubt.'

'He seems to think——' I began, but he stopped me.

'A bird without territory', he said, 'would not get a ghost of an offer. That is elementary. How should he?'

'Oh, then with you', I said, 'it is the lady who proposes —and disposes as well?'

He fixed me with a bright blank eye, really about as expressive as a monocle. 'Well, seeing that she is the beginning and end of the whole affair,' he said, 'it would be very odd if she did not.'

'Matriarchy!' I exclaimed. 'I never knew that, but of course——'

He took the charge easily. 'I assure you that we have

to work for our pleasures! Not only must we stake out our claim every year, but we must maintain it, and advertise it. And that's hard work. Morning and evening, in season and out, I have been at it. Year after year!'

This was hard doctrine to me. 'But surely', I urged him, 'in your own case—a long alliance——?'

He was astonished. 'What on earth do you mean? Long alliance! If it is so, I can satisfy you that I have earned it.'

'Do you mean that there is a discretion——?'

He whistled shrewdly. 'I should jolly well say so. Every year my land is open to all comers, and must be defended. Naturally, she never commits herself until the thing is settled one way or another. How could she, poor girl? Look what depends upon it! The whole duty of bird, good Heavens! I grant you that I have maintained her—to put it so—for many years now—quite a number of years: but I am getting on, of course, and sometimes wonder how long I shall be able to keep it up. That's a warning in itself. Confound that chap—excuse me one moment.' Three long leaps, a swift flight the length of the lawn, and a trespasser was substantially warned off.

When he came back—'Forgive my ignorance,' I said, 'but it seems to me that your deeds of arms are only performed on your own kind. Now, there was a wagtail perking about here a little while ago——'

'Well,' he said, 'what about it? He don't matter. My wife couldn't look at him. He's of another race.'

I saw that; but—'Thrushes?' I asked him. 'How about thrushes?'

He was slightly embarrassed. 'Ah, thrushes . . . yes, that's a delicate subject. I am afraid that cases have been

known—rare cases—nearly all of them in confinement, where the morale is—but still, I must admit, the thing is not unknown. After all, thrushes are, in a way, a kindred race. But we don't like it. It is one of those things that *aren't done*. We need not pursue the matter. And anyhow, wagtails, flycatchers, and that sort, don't exhaust the soil. There 's no objection to them on that score.'

I saw that immediately. 'Apart from all that,' I said, 'we have brought our conversation to a point where your code and mine definitely separate. According to yours, fighting, like marriage, can only be with your own nation.'

He threw up his head. 'Well, of course—since there is nothing else to fight about.'

'With us', I said, 'the only people we do not (as a rule) fight with is our own.'

He looked gravely at me. 'So I have understood from a recent acquaintance who came over from France not long ago. He had been compelled to leave his estates owing to what I must be pardoned for calling the deplorable proceedings of your and other nations. Incredible! But we must make allowances——'

'I hope you will,' I said humbly, for I felt his rebuke. 'Yet I believe that your race also would allow the unfortunate necessity of defending your homes against marauders, brigands, buccaneers, sea and land pirates.'

He admitted that freely. 'Of course, of course! Landless folk. There are enemies of the kind, one knows: homophagists, cannibals, God knows what: crows, hawks, jays—! Naturally, one can't see one's children devoured before one's eyes. But men of property, a settled nation—did you think the Germans would eat your children, by any chance?'

'Well, we did think almost that at one time,' I confessed. He laughed—quite pleasantly.

'How comical! But one gets flustered now and again—then one makes a fool of oneself.' I owned that one did. He looked quizzically at me as he pursued his advantage.

'Supposing that you really thought that the Germans would kill your children, do you now think that they would have killed as many as you yourselves caused to be killed in defence of them? It seems unlikely. One would suppose that the Germans would have other things to do if they had come here.'

'Britons', I firmly said, 'never will be slaves.'

He lifted his beak, perhaps his eyebrows, but I could see none. 'Slaves! Well—that of course is a relative term. The question should have been—our question *would* have been—Would invasion, even occupation, by the Germans interfere with the Great Affair?'

'You mean——?' I said.

He replied severely, 'There is only one Great Affair.' He left it at that, and left me too. We did not meet again for some days.

II

A warm, still evening after a day of sun-glare and blustering wind—the wind which we call a 'tucking wind' in these parts. I heard him piping in the yew-hedge on the border-line of his country, and presently found him, high-perched upon one of the domes of the huge clump which we know as the Kremlin. 'Hulloa,' I said; he lightly replied with a 'Hulloa yourself,' and then dropped

down within chatting range. That made things easier for me. I can never talk up to a man on a ladder.

I said, to begin with, that he had given me a great deal to think about; that his point of view differed very much from ours—in nothing more than in the exclusive importance he attached to what he called the Great Affair. Knowing him touchy upon that subject, marking indeed a premonitory ruffling of plumage, I hastened to suggest other matters which seemed to us of perhaps equal weight. I instanced Religion, Discovery, Art, as causes for which a man might forswear father, mother, wife, and even children. 'Love——' I began: he chuckled—then checked himself.

'Aren't you confusing ends and means, possibly?' he asked. 'Just consider. What sort of a Religion is it which moves you to neglect your duty? What purpose is there in Discovery which cannot better your race? As for Art—well, that is an embroidery of life. One does not commit suicide for the sake of a pretty nest.'

'Sacrifice—' I murmured—'pursuit of the ideal——'

He leapt hastily into the air.

'Oh, sacrifice!' he cried: 'God knows what *we* know of sacrifice! More, I believe, than you have begun to understand. Nor can you hope to understand it until you discern the ends of sacrifice. Let me ask you this: have you a clear notion of what Validity means? Think that out if you wish to understand our religion. Ah, sacrifice, for instance! Pursuit of the ideal! Just take the trouble to consider the claims of Validity.'

'Efficiency,' I said, 'is a term which has grown common among us of late. I don't doubt that we include much of what you cover by your "Validity".'

He looked more than doubtful. 'We'll soon see about that. Do you hold inefficiency to be a crime?'

'A misfortune, rather,' I said. He laughed.

'So I thought. My dear Sir, we are a long way off each other. I fear that I must trouble you to listen to me.'

I said that I was at his feet—which was literally true. 'With us,' he said, 'the End of life is attained when we have carried on the race to the limit of our forces. We do not recognize any other commandment; we do not look to any future but that of the race. To ensure Validity therefore is the whole duty of Bird. The greatest crime I could commit would be to become in-valid; the greatest crime my neighbours could commit would be to suffer me to exist, being in-valid.'

'Let me understand once for all,' I interposed. 'By in-valid you mean incapable of the Great Affair?'

'That only.'

'And they would put you to death!' I cried. 'If you were ill, if you were maimed?'

'Undoubtedly they would.'

'Life, then, has no sanctity among you?'

'It has so much sanctity,' he said plainly, 'that death has none. Life insists on continuance at all costs—yours, mine, or another's, it matters not a straw. When Validity ceases, life is negligible, and an offence.'

'I know,' I said slowly, thinking as I spoke. 'I know that you take death very lightly. I have observed that for myself. You seem to have no associations, no memories——'

'When you are dead,' he replied, 'you cease to exist, for us. If you cease to exist you are not here. You may be elsewhere. We say, you are in your race, which cannot

die. Certainly you are not in what you leave behind you, stark on the ground.'

'We', I said, 'reverence the dead for what they once were.'

'You seem foolish to me,' he answered. 'What you once were is elsewhere. Reverence that.'

I felt the rebuke. My eyes sank before the unblinking ring of one of his. Presently he resumed.

'Reverence, rather, Life,' he said, 'and take example from my nation. Don't you understand how far we carry that principle? Don't you know that to defend Life we will cheerfully lose it?' I struck in.

'Nobody can deny that virtue at least to us,' I said. 'In our late war tens of thousands of our young men laid down their lives without one look backward.'

'And how many tens of thousand young Germans laid down theirs?' he asked me. 'I see I must be plainer yet with you. Consider the enemy of all birds, whom we call the Strumpet—and rightly so, for she alone in our genus claims the services of many males, and she alone is careless of her own race. Think for a moment of what many and many a poor couple will do in whose nest the Great Strumpet spawns her lust-begotten egg. Day by day that monstrous nakedness swells and spreads, hour by hour from the yawning gullet comes howling for food. They see their flesh and blood cast out, crushed, throttled, suffocated. There is no more end to the tragedy than to the clamour and inordinate desire. The world resounds with them: death is abroad, with life in the midst of it—evil, insatiate, enemy, alien; but life. What do the parents but spend themselves on the tyrant which is murdering their young? They feed the death-dealer even though by

that very act he be enabled to deal further death. More than that, the country-side is under contribution, bringing in provision to her who hereafter will levy more ruin and death. You prate to me of your religion—you to me? Ah, when your people, who dread the Germans, for religion's sake feed German children, then you may measure religions with mine. But that is not yet.' His neck feathers stood dangerously out, his golden beak remained open. I feared the pip for him; but he shook himself, and made excuses.

'Forgive me. I was warm. Naturally. I feel strongly on these matters. The Cuckoo-peril is constantly before us. Only lately a dear friend of ours was a victim.'

I said that it must be particularly hateful to his own race, considering the strictness of its views of the marriage-state. Polygamy was a different matter, almost involved in patriarchy. That he allowed, but was struck by my suggestion that polyandry was perhaps only an extension of the matriarchal system. He could not allow it, however, on reflection. 'No, no, it is promiscuity, neither more nor less. It is no better than a house-sparrow. But we have wandered from the point. The subject is a very painful one.'

The conversation, once broken off, was not resumed. His wife called him, and he hastened away.

Good Saint Use

SAINT GEORGE is for England, as we know very well; but his altars are served more in town than country. In the villages we have another saint whose worship dates from long before the Christian rule. An endlong study of mine has been, and still is, to track him, so to speak, to his cradle; to find him in his insipient days when, as the Primitives showed our Lord, or his friend little St. John, he might be playing about with a goldfinch in his fist, or cuddling the neck of a lamb. But Saint Use, I think, was born wise, and slow, and old.

His altar is the lap of every village-wife who respects herself. Upon it she offers a daily oblation to the name and fame of her house. Beside it—at its horns which are her knees—the generations in turn are taught the rudiments of his worship; how to walk under his shrewd horny-rimmed eyes, how to play with each other, how to face school, and the school-yard discipline, which is the harder of the two, how to meet (with what fine shades of difference) the clergyman and the minister, the ladies, the owner of the great house and the farmers; which old men you may call by their Christian names, and which never; when to put up your hair, if you are a girl, or to smoke, if you are a boy; the rules of acquaintance when playtime is done with; courtship, betrothal, the ritual of marriage, childbirth, death and its dues—all these things you learn at Saint Use's altar, and none of them anywhere else. The precepts may never be varied, and never have been. But they are

strictly local. If a family leaves the village and settles in a town; if a young man goes for a policeman or a soldier, or a motor-mechanic, and founds a family of his own in London or Bristol, Glasgow or Liverpool, the lore departs from him, and he won't pick it up again should he return. But if he go farming to the States or to Canada, Saint Use goes with him, chief of his *Lares*; and the rite will persist though the ritual may vary.

All that is to put the thing at its broadest: naturally there are the slack, the indifferent, and the libertines to be reckoned with. The point is that there are no infidels. The rules may be relaxed; faith may be without works; but the Faith is unquestioned. It is learned indirectly; it is imbibed rather than learned, taken in at the pores. Like essential Christianity as the Quakers exhibit it, it is a Way of Life. Occasionally, but the case is rare, it conflicts with the more authorized religion. When it does so, it prevails; and the reason of that may be that dogmatic Christianity has seldom been a Way of Life in England, and lacks the basic strength which the older rule has. Nor need it seem so very odd that Quakerism has never made much way with village people, who, having an illumination of their own, may feel instinctively that there cannot be two lamps burning in one heart. I am not inclined to dogmatize about that; but this I know, that where the law of Church or Chapel conflicts with the earlier law, the followers of Saint Use do not hesitate to pronounce 'under which King'. Two common points of divergence present themselves at once: Divorce and Illegitimacy, to name effect for cause. Marital infidelity, I should say, was the rarest of all village trespasses, certainly on the woman's part; I believe on the man's also. The Churches offer no remedy but suffer-

ance. All village people would stand clear for divorce. On the other hand, illegitimacy—not profligacy, which is high disgrace—is common; yet it may always be righted (they think) by marriage, not necessarily with the offending party; and the mother does not lose caste. In both cases Church and Chapel would be stern in rebuke. Saint Use has a milder rule. So also his ethic may conflict with that of the State. Take poaching. Policeman and magistrate condemn it; but Saint Use says, Not at all. You will never convince a peasant that a hare is not his for the knocking over.

I dare say that I could name half a hundred families hereabout, sound Church or Chapel folk, Foresters or Rechabites, some voting Tory at elections, some all for Labour, as the case may be, who are none the less strict followers of Saint Use. But whenever I begin to think them over I find my thoughts falling upon one family in particular which I have known intimately for many years, one in which I will not deny that the weight of the full tradition has been supported by force of character out of the common. But consider it, you who would know what, between them, character and tradition may do. Father, a farm-labourer, son, grandson, descendant of such, earning when I first knew him fourteen shillings a week. A man, at that time, of fifty, or rather more. Mother, small, thin, wiry, near-sighted, troubled with varicose veins; incessantly at work in somebody's house, any house (apparently) but her own; never, so far as one knew, with a clear day at home except Sunday. Family, six daughters, ranging in age from thirty to half as much. There had been a son, a fine young man, who had died of an accident on the eve of his marriage. All but one of those girls had been put to service at fifteen, and

all had done well. Five are married, all five have children; all are fortunate in them, and all but one have been fortunate in their men. The youngest girl, out of what her mother could earn, was sent to a High School, took a scholarship, then a degree, and is now in full work as a teacher. Now, the house in which they were all born, from which they went out to be married, to which they all come back, as to home, as often as they can, is one half of a thatched building, shaped like a hencoop. It has one room down, two up—hutches, those, under the thatch, where you can barely stand, and where, to look out of the window, you must lie on the floor. In such a marten's nest that strong couple reared six handsome girls to be as good as they are handsome. Now be pleased to observe: those children were never out of sight, except in school-hours. They might never play in the village street: they never did. As they grew up, and walking days came on, lads of one sort or another came about them, and were welcomed or not, accepted or not, as might be. But neither then, nor afterwards when courting took its natural place, were unaccompanied walks permitted; and neither at home nor in service was that rule broken. I have it from two of them that so it was until they were twenty-one. There were betrothals, of course, before that age, rings exchanged, family solemnities. No matter. The rule held. How it could have been inculcated, how enforced, except through the pores, I do not know. But this I know, that that little old woman, peering with dim blue eyes through spectacles at the world as it passes, is still the centre and shrine of family honour and love, though the family itself is now broken up into five, each with its hearth and domestic ritual. One of the daughters is now a woman of forty with

children looking out into the world. The rule holds; they have been brought up by it, they will carry it on. Great is Saint Use. By his fruits you shall know him.

They say that the roots of his altar are being sapped by changes in the world beyond his pale. Prosperity, they say, is slackening the knees of his sons; vanity and frivolity, and new approaches to them, are stinging the blood of his daughters. I grant the danger. The lore may fade, the altar sag in the middle, break all about us and smother in dust the hearth—but I hope not. With Saint Use will depart a something which has made the best of us what we are, and England what it is. Myself, I trust to Character.

Painful Admission

THE other night I drove, by invitation, some sixteen miles south by west, through and beyond Cranbourn Chace, from pastoral Wilts into woody Dorset. An open car, a frosty night, and a keen wind. We climbed a bare down, picked our way in and out of the unpeopled Chace, and descended into our neighbour shire through foggy woods tenanted by white owls, and haunted by their cries. There may still have been deer harboured there: it would not have seemed strange to me to hear the sudden howl of a wolf, a signal for more dreadful music of a pack in full cry. Anon we turned into the Blandford road—a road so white under the moon that it looked to be new-fallen snow—and ran a switchback course of some six miles between hills as bare as picked bones. There too one expected some revenant or other—say, the Weymouth mail spanking into Handley, or a gibbet at the cross-roads, with a tattered thing in chains, and a crow flacking off as we passed.

After we had turned once more we were in great woods, and passed Eastbury, hidden up in forest trees, with the stone pillars and pompous gates still standing which once led the traveller to Bubb Dodington's enormous house. There is little left of it now, I hear; but what a house for what a man that must have been! Bubb himself was one of the monumental rascals of our history, one too who made his own monument without knowing it, in the imperishable brass of literature. And that remains; while Eastbury, having been a quarry for some half-dozen villages and

farmhouses, has shrunk to but one wing of what Vanbrugh built for him, at the price of £140,000. 'The approach to the house was through a beautiful lawn, whence you passed through a grand arcade, on each side of which the offices were ranged, and you landed on a flight of steps eleven feet high, under a Doric portico, crowned with a pediment extending sixty-two feet, the pillars whereof were forty-six feet high, opening into a magnificent hall adorned with statues and busts'. That was the kind of thing: the House that Bubb built. But the house in which he lives for aye, the other house that Bubb built is his Diary, *aere perennius*. But I am astray. I wish to moralize, but not upon Bubb.

Just beyond his great gates, thick in trees of his planting, is the rectory-house of his village, Tarrant-Gunville by name. There we stopped the engine and thawed ourselves; for there my business was to begin.

My business was to entertain the village people for an hour—and I did it, or so it seemed. I suppose, as Charles II said, that my nonsense suited their nonsense. The room was full of them, broad-faced, low-browed, bright-eyed people; the young men ruddy and plain, some of the girls very pretty in a delicate sort of way; old chin-bearded men with gnarled hands on sticks, who looked as if they had left their smock-frocks at home; the schoolmistress, as you could tell in a moment; the postmistress; grooms from Eastbury; and a row of shock-headed boys banked against the wall and swinging their feet rather ominously. But that was a false alarm. They were as still as mice from start to finish.

Before I dared to open my simple budget, however, I felt bound to make the painful admission which I here

record. I made it, but perfunctorily, not feeling its full force until I had opened my book and begun to read to them. I had been asked by the rector, you shall understand, to 'give an address' to these people, and my admission had to be that, such as I was, I was not possessed of exact knowledge of any subject whatsoever, and that consequently I did not feel entitled to 'address' them. Amuse them I might, thrill them, possibly; but instruct them—no. They laughed at me, thinking that the best way of taking it: in Dorset they are as good-mannered as we are in Wilts, and know by instinct how to set a man at his ease. *Vous plaisantez*, was the effect of their comment, and I left it at that. But I meant it, and I felt it—I didn't know how much until I was heavily engaged with my affair.

For just consider it. Exact knowledge was what I owned to the want of; and I was facing an assembly of experts! Not a man, not a woman, boy or girl there but was more valid in their world than myself. I say nothing of the operations of husbandry—of plowing, dock-hoeing, sowing, reaping, threshing; of warping the meadows, of shepherding sheep, ringing pigs' noses, or dealing with tom-cats. These things any one of my audience could do —but that is particular knowledge; in that they specialized. If I am to consider that, I might set off against it that I can read Homer in his own language or write a longish poem in *terza rima*. On that ground I might come upsides with them. But, by Heaven! they could do much more than that. Think only of this among the numberless trades they had mastered: there was not one there, man or boy, woman or maid, who, put down in a cottage and few luggs of garden-ground, could not within a month have been keeping himself well, could not within three hours have

got some sort of a meal on the table. You say, were there a pen and some ink at hand, so could you. I don't mean that at all. Before I had sat down to my commerce with the inkpot I should have been starved out. The cold would have pinched me, the fire would not be drawing; there would be nothing in the pot, and nothing to put in it. Could I keep a pig? Good God, could I kill him? And even if I killed him—say, with a hand-grenade and a slow match—what the deuce should I do next? I shudder at the thought of what that might have to be. Well then, could I set a hen, plant potatoes, dibble in my cabbages, make a pudding and immediately eat it, take a swarm of bees, sweep a chimney, draw a rabbit, skin it, bake or boil it? Not one of those things could I do to save my life. And I had been asked to 'address' those experts in the art of living!

Well, I read them my fairy-tale, and they seemed to like it; but the fairy-tale I was involved in lay, I thought, outside my book. They seemed, God bless them, to look upon me as a noticeable man, in Wordsworth's phrase. I confess that I felt noticeably foolish. I felt indeed that I and the now dusty Bubb made a pretty pair, and as I sped again past shrouded Eastbury on my way home Gray's ode came into my head:

> How low, how little are the proud,
> How indigent the great!

There are implications in all this which can hardly be avoided. There is this, for instance: that, so far, I have been able, by my wits, to hire persons to do those things for me which I cannot attain unto—specialists, experts in the domestic arts. Yes, it has so far been so, and to my

mind there is a reproach for me in that also. How many times have I not felt like saying to the maid who lent her grace and nimbleness, her spirit and her youth, to waiting at my table, making my bed, or brushing and folding my clothes, 'My dear, you put me to shame, since surely it is I rather who ought to be waiting upon you'? Fifty, a hundred times. But apart from that, which is perhaps high doctrine, there is this also, that the maids are not now to be had. Where shall I be, and where my sultanate, then? Down with sultans, by all means; but perishing is another affair; and since I am to all intents an armless man, somebody must be dug out who will kill my pigs for me and put morsels into my mouth—or there 's an end of me. These are very serious reflections—but at least I have made a clean breast of them.

The Children who Ran Away

NOT in my youth, but in that of my children, there was a happy little book of that name which became a household bible. How many times I have read it through aloud I could not possibly say. Miss Evelyn Sharp (for I think it was hers) will forgive me for borrowing a title which exactly fits the tale I am going to rehearse—a true tale, and an old tale, all the people in it dead and gone; but a tale so comic, so tragic, so hapless, so little understood, that even now it is worth getting at, on the off-chance that by unravelling the clue may remain in our hands.

Two things can be learned of Shelley—how other people affected him, and how he affected other people: but the third thing, Shelley *an sich*, can only be guessed at from the resultants of the two former. It will never be known to any valuable extent and there 's a reason for that; indeed, there are several reasons—but one is enough. That one is that he had the knack of appearing the most reasonable of men. Grant him his premisses and he is perfectly logical. So much so, so entirely so, that he imposed his reasonableness upon himself to start with, and thus was able to state the extraordinary in terms of the ordinary more convincingly than any other accepted poet, the supernatural also in terms of the natural. Sometimes, however, he is so reasonable in an outrageous position as to be suspicious to the intelligent student. His poems and the content of them one accepts for what they are: *Epipsychidion*, for instance, and *Ariel to Miranda*. Love songs—one

knows them and allows for them. But his letters of grave and dignified expostulation to the bloodsucking Godwin; his serious efforts to convey sense into the head of Jane Clairmont, and the fact which pervades his correspondence with her that he never suspected her of being the mischievous and insincere little parasite she was—here he is so much 'more than usual calm' as to force the sudden inquiry, is this a man, or a seraph? It is tempting to call him an ass and be done with him; it is also foolish, because he was far from being one. You may shrug the whole pack of him and his ladies away with the 'What a set! What a world!' of Mathew Arnold; but you explain nothing by that. To Southey he appeared a scoundrel; but Southey was a plain man much preoccupied with his duty and much aware of it. Study by all means Mary Shelley's account of the kind of creature to whom she submitted herself and her ardour; guess from that what Harriet Shelley's might have been, before you decide what Shelley was, rather than ass or scoundrel. Both of those children ran away with him, and each paid for it. Each of them had a fairy husband.

Our knowledge—or my knowledge—of Mary Shelley is grounded upon her *Life and Letters* edited by Mrs. Julian Marshall, and published by Bentley in 1889. Mrs. Marshall tells us that she had access to all existing material, and that Professor Dowden had had the same liberty. They had then access, it is plain, to much which they have not used; and that being so, it is surprising that they should both have missed the point; for if that is apparent to me, reading what they print, how much more must it have buffeted them in their faces as they read what they have not printed. But the fact, I am sure, is that

they were both under the spell of Shelley as they studied his wife's diaries, of his high seriousness and grave reasonableness. Those qualities imposed themselves upon them —and no wonder, since they imposed upon Shelley himself. They usurped in the minds of the biographers that place which they had assumed also in Mary's mind, a place which they only lost there for moments at a time even while Shelley lived, and reassumed permanently the moment after he was dead, when indeed, for that poor girl,

più che 'l dolor, potè 'l digiuno.

Of the pair of them Mrs. Marshall publishes rather more and says rather less than Professor Dowden: but neither of them sees the point.

Mary Godwin, a pretty, ardent, and serious girl, was sixteen when Shelley fell in love with her, and seventeen when he took her away. In spite of a railing and vulgar-minded stepmother (as to whose character consult Charles Lamb) she had lived a happy life, and was to all intents and purposes a baby—not the less so for having been fed upon the sour milk of the Philosopher her father, and subject to his periodical serious alarums and not too scrupulous excursions on the score of money. Her knowledge of life and of the world were as entirely academic as his own. She took him very seriously, never lost her love, nor so far as appears, her reverence for him, and even before she met her fate was doing her young best to be as much of a prig as he was. An American, Aaron Burr, in those days wandering in London, gives us glimpses of her in 1812. He dines, for instance, with Godwin and hears his little son William read a lecture—in imitation of Coleridge, of course—which Mary had written for him.

Mary was fifteen. The subject was 'The influence of Government on the Character of a People.' That is very jolly; but what follows is jollier. 'After the lecture we had tea, and the girls danced and sang an hour'. Human nature breaking in! The girls were Fanny Imlay, Mary, and Jane Clairmont, into whose complicated relationships to each other I need not enter.

Shelley, his wife Harriet, and sister-in-law, met her at dinner in that year, but not again until 1814. The next meeting must have been the critical moment, for on June 8 occurred the pretty scene related by Hogg. Shelley and he went into the philosopher's study, where the philosopher was not. Hogg examined the bookshelves, Shelley padded up and down like a caged panther, lightfooted and feverish. 'The door was partially opened. A thrilling voice called "Shelley!" A thrilling voice answered "Mary!" and he darted out of the room like an arrow from the bow of the far-shooting king. A very young female, fair, fair-haired, pale indeed and with a piercing look, wearing a frock of tartan, an unusual dress in London at that time, had called him out of the room.' On June 20 he gave her a *Queen Mab*, but by then the thing was done. She wrote in it a month later, 'This book is sacred to me, and as no other creature shall ever look in it, I may write what I please. Yet what shall I write? That I love the author beyond all powers of expression, and that I am parted from him. Dearest and only love, by that love we have promised to each other, although I may not be yours, I can never be another's. But I am thine, exclusively thine.' She quotes Byron, on whose dangerous food she had fed; then, 'I have pledged myself to thee, and sacred is the gift. I remember your words, "You are now, Mary, going to

mix with many, and for a moment I shall depart, but in the solitude of your chamber I shall be with you." Yes, you are ever with me, sacred vision.' Then Byron again. That was the way of it. She was sixteen. On the 28th of July she and Jane Clairmont left Skinner Street and, with Shelley, posted to Dover. She was within a few days of her seventeenth birthday.

With all respect to the biographers, Mrs. Marshall and Professor Dowden, nothing is less certain than that Shelley believed Harriet unfaithful. It is obvious from Mr. Ingpen's *Letters* that she was nothing of the kind, and that Shelley did not think her so. It is obvious that he was simply and madly desirous of Mary; Peacock's reminiscence proves that. What is to the purpose is that Mary was equally in love. It is not clear who was responsible for Jane's, the little parasite's, being of the party, though I don't doubt that it was herself. Shelley would have made no objection, and did not. Indeed, when they were half way through France on their way to Switzerland he proposed to add one more girl to the two he had with him, no less a girl than Harriet Shelley. His letter to her from Troyes is not that of a human being. It is the letter of a 'Young Visiter'.

> 'I write to you from this detestable town; I write to show that I do not forget you; I write to urge you to come to Switzerland where you will at last (that should surely be 'at least') find one firm and constant friend to whom your interests will always be dear—by whom your feelings will never wilfully be injured.'

The brain reels. He goes on to relate the incidents of the journey, speaks of Mary, 'who has not been sufficiently well to walk', describes the scenery, anticipates welcoming

her 'to some sweet retreat I will procure for you among the mountains', sends love to his 'sweet little Ianthe', is ever most affectionately hers, writes in great haste—'we depart directly'. Except on the only possible hypothesis, that is a damnable letter, on which any man might be described as a heartless rascal. Not a hint, you see, that he suspected Harriet: on the contrary, he is her 'firm and constant friend.' Not a sign that he suspected himself of anything out of the common way. It shows him not only a non-moral young man, but a callous young man beyond belief, and more obtuse than any mule. But we must be calm. He was not non-moral, but subject to another morality than ours. He was callous because he could only think of one thing at a time, and what he wanted he must have. At the moment it was Harriet. A moment ago it had been Mary. Mrs. Marshall pertinently remarks here that Harriet did not go, and adds that it was as well, for that, at about the time she would have arrived in Switzerland, the excursionists would be entering the Port of London. And Mr. Ingpen gives poor Harriet's letter in which she, very naturally, and as I think rather touchingly, lays the seduction at Mary's door. Then she quotes:—'Why could we not all live together? I as his sister, she as his wife? He had the folly to believe this possible, and sent for me, then residing at Bath. You may suppose how I felt at the disclosure. I was laid up for a fortnight after.' There is gallantry in the counter-attack, but of course it won't do. The letter from Troyes is Shelley's all over. He was the 'Young Visiter'.

The account of the whole tour would be delightful reading if it did not involve so serious a thing as life and

death, begetting and birth. It is a joint diary; all three are engaged in it. They buy a donkey for Mary, and start to walk across France, 'dressed in black silk'. At every town they reach one of them exclaims, generally Jane, 'Oh, this is beautiful! Let us live here!' Shelley twists his ankle, and must ride the donkey; the ladies walk; they are swindled right and left, with both hands—how not? They reach Switzerland, and begin to write a romance. They read Tacitus, Shakespeare, *l'Histoire du Jacobinisme*, run out of money, and make a bolt for home. They go down the Rhine to Rotterdam. 'Mary begins *Hate* . . . Shelley writes part of his romance'! They embark: 'Mary writes more of her *Hate* . . . the sea is horribly tempestuous, and Mary is nearly sick, nor is Shelley much better'. Next day: 'It is calm, . . . Mary recovers . . . we dispute with one man upon the slave trade'. Delightful children; but the money was out, and more must be found. They were now in a cold world, and Mary with child. Shelley must call on Harriet for twenty pounds, must go to Hookham for credit, get clothes, find a lodging. 'Shelley calls on Harriet who is certainly an odd creature', Mary writes. It is little wonder. He himself called on Hookham presently, and brought home Wordsworth's *Excursion*, 'of which we read a part. Much disappointed. He is a slave.' So much for Wordsworth anyhow. The voice is the child's, but she is quoting her elf.

Godwin now comes into the tale again, with his drooping nose and yet more drooping moral sense. He is very indignant, and very intent on drawing money from his offender. He refuses to see him, but will see the colour of his money. He is given a cheque and professes himself insulted that it is drawn in his name. What will the

world think? Even then the world knew more of its Godwin than that esurient moralist believed. It was rumoured to his discredit, Mrs. Marshall says, that he had sold the two girls to Shelley for £800 and £700 respectively. Harriet put the figure at £3,000. All that I need add is that he did his best.

The three young visiters moved from lodging to lodging —St. Pancras, Somers Town, Nelson Square, Hans Place and so on. Shelley has to dodge the bailiffs, interview Harriet, lawyers, bill-discounters and what not. All the time Jane is with them, and much of the time Mary is alone while those two are walking in Kensington Gardens and being locked in, or sitting up late 'talking of oppression and reform', of 'cutting squares of skin from the soldiers' backs', or hearing Jane state 'her conception of the subterranean community of women'. Or they talk of ghosts, and of *Orra*, the tragedy of Fear by Joanna Baillie. Jane shrieks in the night, or walks in it, and has to be calmed by news of Mary's pregnancy. Or Jane sulks with Shelley and won't talk all day. Interspersed with all this, *Political Justice*, the *Empire of the Nairs*, *The Ancient Mariner*, fireworks, and 'sailing little boats', Culture and children's play. Much also of 'Shelley and Jane walk as usual'. But through all, from end to end, culture is the rule of the house. Mary reads, Shelley reads, Jane, apparently, is read to. There are lists as long as from here to Easter of the tomes demolished. Culture, usury, little boats, breeding, hide-and-seek with Sheriffs' officers: the most heart-breaking record of butterfly-racking, marionettes' funerals, that exists in English, I think. The children who ran away! Yes, indeed. And now one of them is to have a baby.

It was born in February, in lodgings, barely a seven months' child. Nine days after it was born they had to move into new lodgings. On the night of its birth Hogg was staying with them. 'Maie perfectly well and at ease,' Shelley writes . . . 'the child not expected to live. Shelley sits up with Maie, much exhausted and agitated. Hogg sleeps here'. Four days later Hogg was still there: 'Maie rises to-day. Hogg comes; talk; she goes to bed at six . . .' 'Read *Corinne* (Mary is writing this diary) Shelley and Clara (Jane) go to sleep. Hogg returns; talk with him till past eleven . . . Shelley and Clara go down to tea. Just settling to sleep when a knock comes at the door; it is Fanny; she came to see how we were; she stays talking till half-past three, and then leaves the room that Shelley and Mary may sleep. Shelley has a spasm'. It is to be wondered that he had a wife at this rate. It was four days after confinement.

Here is March 1. 'Nurse the baby, read *Corinne*, and work. Shelley and Clara out all morning. In the evening Peacock comes. Talk about types, editions, and Greek letters all the evening. Hogg comes. They go away at half-past eleven. Bonaparte invades France.' O Heavens!

Next day they changed lodgings. 'A bustle all morning. Read *Corinne*. I and my baby go at three. Shelley and Clara do not come till six. Hogg comes in the evening.' Then comes this:

'Monday, March 6. Find my baby dead. Send for Hogg. A miserable day. In the evening read *Fall of the Jesuits*. Hogg sleeps here.' Comment fails me. *The Fall of the Jesuits*! And Hogg!

Tuesday, March 7. Shelley and Clara go after break-

fast to town. Write to Fanny. Hogg stays all day with us; talk to him, and read *The Fall of the Jesuits* and *Rinaldo Rinaldini*. Not in good spirits. Hogg goes at eleven. A fuss. To bed at three.'

On the 9th—'read and talk. Still think about my little baby. 'Tis hard indeed for a mother to lose a child.[1] Hogg and Charles Clairmont come in the evening .... Hogg stays all night. Read Fontenelle, *Plurality of Worlds*'.

The picture haunts one, cannot be put away: the dead baby on the bed, the *Fall of the Jesuits*; Hogg; the fastening black-eyed parasite; *Plurality of Worlds*; Godwin after money, Harriet somewhere with another baby and drowning in her eyes—little more than babies themselves, the pair of them; children who ran away—with an elf!

But it goes on, this astounding record. A moment's irritation escapes the poor girl on the 11th. 'Very unwell. Hogg goes to town. Talk about Clara's going away; nothing settled; I fear it is hopeless. She will not go to Skinner Street; then our house is the only remaining place, I see plainly. What is to be done?'

And again, next day: 'Not well, but better. Very

[1] When Mary lost her boy William, then her last surviving child, in Italy, Godwin took 'the privilege of a father and a philosopher' to expostulate with her in her depression. 'What is it you want that you have not? You have the husband of your choice . . . you have all the goods of fortune, all the means of being useful to others, and shining in your proper sphere. But you have lost a child: and all the rest of the world, all that is beautiful, and all that has a claim upon your kindness is nothing, because a child of two years old is dead.' Then he goes on to divide all the human species into two great classes. One would like to have met this philosopher.

quiet all the morning, and happy, for Clara does not get up till four'. On the day after that, however, the parasite was up and about. 'Shelley and Clara go to town. Stay at home; net, and think of my little dead baby. This is foolish, I suppose, yet whenever I am left alone to my own thoughts, and do not read to avert them, they always come back to the same point—that I was a mother, and am so no longer'. She dreamed about it on the 19th, that it 'came to life again; that it had only been cold, and that we rubbed it before the fire, and it lived. Awake and find no baby. I think about the little thing all day'.

On the 13th of May, however, the parasite really did go, and the record ends, 'I begin a new journal with our regeneration'. You can still hear the sigh of release. Poor child, it was not for long.

Some insight into the martyrdom of two girls may be gathered from this tragic farce; for as Mary suffered from Jane Clairmont so had Harriet from Mary, to say nothing of Mrs. Boinville. So, as all readers know, was Mary to go on suffering from Jane Clairmont, from Emilia Viviani, from Jane Williams. There was, and could be no end to the torment, except what happened in Lerici Bay. A curious little ejaculation reported by Trelawny suggests that the tragedy of the Bay was not too soon for Mary's peace, perhaps also for Shelley's. Shelley was in the Pineta, Trelawny and Mary went to find him there. The heat exhausted her and she sat in the outskirts of the wood, while Trelawny stalked Shelley. He found him, books and papers scattered all about, rapt in the sighing of the pine tree-tops. 'Their chorus', he said, 'is the eternal wailing of wretched men'. Trelawny suggested that they were at the moment reinforced by the wailing of one

wretched woman—'a forsaken lady. I left your wife, Mary Shelley, at the entrance of this grove, in despair at not finding you.' Shelley snatched up his books and papers: 'Poor Mary! hers is a sad fate. Come along; she can't bear solitude, nor I society—*the quick coupled with the dead.*' If Shelley was getting bored Mary was to be made unhappy. Trelawny, however, is not to be relied upon.

No more of it. Nothing is gained by calling Shelley a scoundrel, but much by realizing that he was not a human creature and therefore not under our moral law. Southey might lift his hands to Heaven, Sir Timothy foam at the mouth, Harriet drown herself, Mary droop—all in vain. Nobody who knows him in his correspondence can call him a scoundrel. I say nothing of his poetry: poetry doesn't count. When the robe is on, the man is enskied, carried up by the incondite, shown the stars in their courses, or the heart of the universe, and bidden, Write.

> Ed io a lui: 'Io mi son un che, quando
> Amor mi spira, noto,' . . .

No, poetry does not reveal a man, rather the creature which is within, driving him, lifting, sinking him, to heights too cold or depths too horrible for the likes of men. If the thing within you is master and lord, and instils itself into your deeds, then Heaven help your women. Shelley was in the keeping of a fairy. And let us believe that Heaven did help Mary, as it did not, or could not, help Harriet.

We Commend our Dead

WE move slowly in the West; but we get there in the end. Labour troubles in the natural hiving-place of such things, with which we had nothing to do, held up our Memorial Cross, so that we unveiled it only the other day, two and a half years after the piling of arms, in some cases six years after the sacrifice had been made. Eighteen out of ninety of our young men did not come back; and now we have their names as nearly imperishable as may be, and much more so than the poor faithful dust strewn in France, or the gentle memories which will last no longer than ourselves. Perhaps not so long indeed; for as we grow and age, our hearts become a storehouse of such memories, *columbaria* in which the last comer takes the front of the shelf and obscures one or other of its forerunners. We have people, still going to and fro on accustomed affairs, of ninety years or more. Think what they must have to carry besides their burden of age!

Good names stand out there, on the base of the rough-hewn cross, names which have been here as long as the village; very likely came with it, and had to do with the building of it when the river had dug itself a bed, and ran swiftly between banks instead of oozily about mud-flats. Gurd and Tryhorne, Penny and Emm, are there, still in all our men's mouths: clan names of ours which go back to the days before writing, perhaps to the days before

articulate speech. Remote ancestors of those clans, we believe, huddled from the cold in pear-shaped pit-dwellings, of which, on the surrounding grassy heights, we have scores and four-scores. Or perhaps they kept the look-out on the chalk ramp of Chesilbury, watching the passes from Groveley, or from Bilbury, or from Winklebury to the south-west. Plain, blunt, unadorned names they are—what could be more uncompromising than Gurd, or Emm? —but with a respectable pedigree behind them if I am right. Older than the village church, older than Stonehenge: as old as Silbury itself. As good a pedigree as you can ask for. It may well be that no men of those names have ever left before the green end of Wilts in which their village lies, a mere combe or pocket in the Downs. That may very well be, given the place and the folk. And now of late, for reason which seemed to them good, ruminating over it afield, turning it about with little speech as they passed each other in the lane leading homeward, or slipped and slurred along the furrows, one at the plow's tail, one at the horses' heads, on the side of the down—now they leave their green shade and cross the sea: they go souse into a storm of fire and stench, of darkness, and noise, and hatred, and murder, such as would palsy their imaginations if they had any: they 'stick it', as they say, with little or no comment, with no hint at all that it is out of the day's work; and for eighteen of our best—*stat nominis umbra!*

As they went out, without gesture, with little or nothing to say, with simple farewells and sober cheer, so their kindred received the news of their fate; sighing, and saying to each other, It was to be; and so lately we

recorded their piety and devotion—without gesture, without sign given that we were showing forth anything to the world, with very little ostensible grief. What our mere presence by the War-Cross, our wreaths of primrose, polyanthus, and king-cup may have prefigured we neither knew nor cared greatly. Of transfiguration, either of ourselves or of our dead, we had no notion in the world. We wore our best clothes, for it was Sunday. We uncovered at the moment of unveiling, remained so through the prayers, and while the Last Post was shrilling out. The long indetermined note on which that call ends, the wildness of self-committal it always sounds to have, made my eyes wet. Those of my neighbours had hornier sheaths, better acquainted, no doubt, with grief than mine, and less wistful (I hope) of what that wail committed us to. When all was over we laid our wreaths about the Cross, and went our ways.

The thing which struck me chiefly and touched me most, was the stoicism of the villagers. Death is the same to all of us; the severance when it comes is always shocking, and rare is the faith which does not feel, whatever it may teach, a dreadful finality about it.

Fear no more the heat of the sun . . .

The poet and good friend of mine who came from six miles off, over the hills, to commend our dead to us and our betters, did not shrink from home truths. He suited himself to our plain habit, speaking shortly, tersely, and without ornament. He did not flinch the beastliness of the work done, or fail to say how that enhanced the sacrifice. And he urged us to remember that names and deeds alike are as negligible to Nature as we are ourselves.

'Their names live for evermore' is a hope rather than a vaunt. It touches but does not convince. Nor should it. Such a sacrifice as our young men (and how many others!) made was offered up as part of the day's work. But we did well to commend them. They laid down their lives for their friends. You can do no more.

One other fact struck me. I don't say that it is peculiar to our village, though when once before we did it, I remarked its singularity. We made over our Memorial to the authorities on high, as Captain Cuttle proposed to make over his—'jointly'. Church and chapel choirs stood and sang together; the Vicar prayed from his formulary, the Minister from his inner consciousness; and a dignitary of the Cathedral, like a Homeric hero, 'drew all off'. I hope that good custom is universal.

Faith and Works at Present

A STRAW will show whither the wind blew me. I was the other day at a country meeting, a meeting of protest against something in particular which drifted, as they often do, into protest against things in general, where, one after another, men with hurts to assuage jumped up in their places and uttered harsh cries of injury, sure in every case of the balm of cheers. Local taxation, naturally, had its side-vortex of debate, about and into which many a tempest-tossed citizen whirled and threw up his arms. There was not so much heat as fine simulation of heat; there was sounding rhetoric none the worse for being familiar; there were appeals to catchwords, flourishings of party banners. One man in particular I observed, a full-moon-faced, shining, prosperous man, a true hunter of applause. That was his meat and drink, worth lure after lure. Some tax-gatherer's indiscretion, excess of zeal, Heaven knows what not, made him sure of his audience. It was good to see him leap upon his prey, hold it by the neck, shake the cheers out of it. 'Gentlemen,' he cried, 'you know me (*We do, we do!*); you know me, as may be our friend in his country's pay did not. Gentlemen, I am not one of those who turn the other cheek——' but there the assembly rose at him, and drowned his utterance. He had touched all hearts; he was the hero of his moment.

The thing to be remarked was that the speaker was precisely one of those who accepted every Sunday the

doctrine, part of which here, on Monday, he so confidently disclaimed. I knew him for a sound and hearty Non-conformist, a buttress of his chapel. Those who heard him were much of his own profession. Yet here he was, not so much denying the teaching of his Master as deriding it—and with no ghost of an idea of what he was doing. The precept of the Gospel had become a signal for the applause of its exact opposite. I have known many a Christian who ignored his doctrine, but I do not recollect that I was ever in a Christian assembly where any point of it had become a standing joke. I do not forget, of course, the eighteenth century, when conformity of public profession was allowed to co-exist with extreme laxity of private opinion. But that was another world. Horace Walpole, George Selwyn, Old Q., with their friends across the Channel, Madame du Deffand, the Duc de Choiseul, and the Princesse de Beauvau, were wits as well as sceptics. Nothing is sacred to a wit; and besides, they were safe within the walls of Establishments which would never quarrel with their bread and butter. My friends in council were in a very different position. Largely, they were out because the others remained in. They were protesting the Faith; and by their fruits they must be judged. I am not able to say that their deeds outline their opinions more closely than those of their Anglican and Latin fellow-Christians. Ever since Christianity ceased to be a Way of Life—which was immediately it became a world-belief—the discrepancy between faith and practice has been observable. But it does show how wide is the chasm when, even among those protesting entire adherence to evangelical doctrine, a portion of it should be treated as a comic paradox. I think that that is highly symptomatic. Faith and

Works may have often, possibly always, been at variance. Christianity is a Council of Perfection for men who are far from perfect. But Faith has stood nevertheless as a kind of staple to which long measure or short could be brought for assay. If that is now to fail, I do not say that the world will cease to be Christian, because it has never yet been so, but that the chance is before us that Christianity itself will fade out.

Probably no body of doctrine with such high professions as were made by Christianity ever became a widespread religious belief. I have called it a Way of Life: it was that, and more; it was an illumination. It was not so much a dispensation which could be codified; it was rather a garment which must shift, expand or contract, with life itself. And if it could not be comprised within a formula, neither could it be presented in a symbol. The weakness of symbols and formulas is that they become rapidly outdistanced by life. If they are not constantly renewed, re-presented, re-translated, they become really without meaning, as the hieratic liturgy of the Eastern Church actually now is, presented in words which the priests and monks themselves often do not understand. Religion on those terms, sacramental, thaumaturgic, mystery-making, emotional, may have a wide appeal. Men may die for it, and kill for it too. But it cannot be called Way of Life, still less an illumination. The test of it is *Credo quia impossibile*.

But Christendom, with the two ways before it, as we all know, chose for dispensation, formula, and symbol. History shows that it then ceased to be a Way of Life for the world in general, though here and there hermits and pious communities maintained it in desert places as some such thing.

The discrepancy between Doctrine and Conduct began at that moment of choice, has gone on since, and has never ceased to go on. As no other religion ever made so high a claim, so no other ever fell so far away from the mind and teaching of its founder. Islamism has lapsed in patches, and Buddhism varied from climate to climate; but Christianity has lapsed as a whole, and has never attempted to be literal. The case is singular—so singular that one might think the discrepancy had never been noticed until to-day. Here, then, you have whole continents, peopled by nations of men who all profess as nations, and mainly as individuals, adherence to a Religion, idealistic, pacificist, altruist, enthusiastic; a religion which commands men to love their enemies, bless them that persecute them, do good to them that despitefully use them; which inculcates poverty as a means of grace, inferentially as the only means; which insists upon the negligibility of the things of this world; which posits the Kingdom of Heaven within the heart of man, and can therefore promise inheritance to the meek, joy to the peacemaker, and comfort to the mourner—all this, as I say, for nearly two thousand years upon the lips of nations of men who have never, as nations, for a year together since the voice which enjoined it was still in death, never for one year attempted to observe any of it. Christians have never ceased to make war on each other, never ceased to hate their enemies, never decried the great possessions of this world as nothing worth, never considered the lilies of the field, never turned the other cheek to the smiter, never believed that the Kingdom of Heaven was within them, never seriously considered where it was, if not there. Is not that extraordinary? It would be if we were not dealing with men.

As the Christianity of Christ has never yet been put to the test collectively, it is impossible to say what success it might have had as a Way of Life. The nature of men being what it is, it might easily have failed. Is it too hard a saying for those who profess it that it should at least be tried? Could it not with probability be said that whatever kind of failure it might make of life, it could not by any possibility make a worse failure than we have made of life without it? I think that might certainly be said. Not only is humanity going to pieces, but religion is going with it. The universal complaint goes up that the Churches are emptying and the Divorce Courts filling (to name only those); and it is a fair inference that if people were more conscious of the tie which binds them to each other in religion they would be less impatient of that which binds them to each other in life. The Way of Life which Christ offered to the world was fairly a Career; but the world, having other careers then in being or in prospect, declined to exchange them, sought rather to accommodate incompatibles, with the striking results which we see about us. Marriage, on the other hand, was never intended to be a career, though it might have helped to make one of religion.

The failure of marriage is a much less serious thing for the world than the renegation of the Laws of Being which we can remark on every hand. I need not, I hope, enlarge upon them, the common lot of the whole of creation, so far as we know it. Nothing that comes into the world can escape the obligation of Work, Love, and Procreation: but if just now men are not evading those duties then two *plus* two do not make four. To what are Labour troubles due but to evasion of the law to work by the men, of the law to love by the masters? To what else was the recent

hideous war due? To what else are you to ascribe the new post-bellum attitude of nearly all the peoples lately engaged in scientific and wholesale murder? The late war made a ghastly wound in the social fabric; but not a clean wound. Instead, a moral gangrene seems to be eating into the very bones of human kind. For those and all such miseries the religion of Christ offers a remedy, at least as much entitled to a trial as Soviet Government in Russia, English Government (to call it so) in Ireland, French handling of beaten Germany, American handling of workmen and negroes. That teaching is to be found in a book which is professed by millions of people as infallible and of divine origin. Officially it is held to be so by all the nations which will not test it by experience. This is an extraordinary position of things. Crystallization of dogma seems to have reached its term.

I have said that Christ's teaching has never been followed, His way of life never attempted. That is true of nations, with which so far I have been dealing. Obviously it is not true of individuals, nor altogether so of groups of individuals. Groups have attempted it: Cathari, Patterini, Franciscans, Hussites, Wycliffites, Albigenses, Friends of God, Port-Royalists, Doukhobors, and suchlike. Most of them have failed owing to internal weakness, and the nature of men; some, like the Albigenses, have been crushed out or worn down by the hostility of governments. One only, English in origin, has endured for three hundred years. That is a group large enough to be called something else. It does not claim to be a Church, and calls itself the Society of Friends. By a term of mockery, now become one of affection, men outside call it the Quakers.

Founded by George Fox, an uninstructed man illuminated by close and literal reading of the Gospels, outliving both a time of persecution and one of moral collapse, that Society has presented to the world for three hundred and more years the nearest approach to the Christlike way of life which has ever been known. It is based upon neighbourly love, is strictly pacificist; in the face of Government it is quietist. It is without formulary or sacrament. So far the likeness is exact. It does not, however, observe the counsel of Poverty, and is in no sense Communistic. In those two points, and in the fact that it has not been zealous to proselytize, it falls short of the teaching of Jesus Christ. But essentially it resembles that teaching in being an enthusiasm, an illumination, and a Way of Life where permeation of body by spirit is complete both in the particular and in the whole. Its doctrine is idealistic and undogmatic. It comes not to destroy, but to fulfil. It is not, as Mr. Carl Heath says in a recent pamphlet,[1] a 'Sect obsessed with a theory of its own exclusive wisdom'; it is 'no creed which alone brings salvation.' 'Whatever else it is,' he goes on to say, 'it is always a movement of spiritual seekers holding out hands of fellowship to all who search for God, for Light and Truth, and for that way of life where men can love God wholeheartedly, and their fellows as themselves.'

So much for that. What is now extremely noteworthy is that since the late war began, the Society of Friends has broken down the defences which screened it from the world, and definitely ranged itself in Europe as a Christian body with work to do correspondent with the faith which

[1] *Quaker Thought in International Service.* By Carl Heath (Friends' Council of International Service).

it holds. With no bridge-making to be done, with no gulf between Belief and Conduct, the Quakers of America and Britain, ever since the Armistice, have been steadily at work throughout Europe, and particularly in Germany and Austria, mending the fortunes of broken people, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, showing forth Goodwill among men who of late years have shown forth none of their own. From reports delivered at a meeting held this month I learn that in Germany something like a million children are being fed, and that in Vienna and the Provinces 'the largest number of children helped at any one time has been 70,000'. Of the sum of their activities at large I have nothing before me but accounts of expenditure. From these I learn that the American Friends' Service Committee have spent during the year June 1919–June 1920—

	$
In France	190,000,
In Germany	2,761,000,
In Serbia	57,777,
In Austria	18,881,
In Armenia	3,871
	$3,031,529

The English Friends' Committee has spent in the year—

	£
In France	117,123,
In Russia	33,276,
In Austria	313,354,
In Poland	86,432,
In Germany	106,956,
In Serbia	1,607
	£658,741

altogether (the English figures alone), with expenses of

administration, material, and allowances to other funds, £693,333.

These figures tell their own story; and if we call the work which they represent 'loving our enemies', as we well may, it is not what they would call it; for they say that it takes two to make a quarrel, and that Quakers quarrel with no sons of men. The matter for the concern of Christendom is that it is a work which I believe I am right in saying no other Church, no other society of Christian people, as such, is doing. What individual adherents to one Church or another may be at is not now to the purpose. The point upon which I must insist is that, professing the doctine of Christ, they keep it, as it were, in an airtight compartment, not only unspotted from the world, but with no chance of braving any spots at all. As Churches, all of them are infected with the dread of importing the affairs of the world into church—a disastrous dichotomy (giving life two lobes, as if it were a brain) of which the Church of England is the most notorious upholder.

What has happened? What is the meaning of all this? To account for it is entirely beyond my powers, which only enable me to report it. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and if it has so far wafted the secret of Christ into one small society of men only, there is, I suppose, nothing to do but to 'wait still upon God'. Meantime, in the place of Love towards men, upon which the whole Evangel is founded, the nations of the world are waiting still upon Hate towards them. Christian Irish still murder Christian English, and English Irish. Russians, having broken down a tyranny which levied war on one class, have set up in its place a tyranny which wars upon another class.

The French, having broken the Germans, hate and fear them more than before. The Turks still massacre the Armenians, the Greeks whatever Turks they can get at. Masters and men have learned nothing by a war which at least showed all men equal in fortune, except to grudge each other their share in it. The very water-drinkers cannot drink their water without having their stomachs turned by the thought of the wine other men are drinking. Alone in creation, it seems, humanity preys upon its own kind. That is where we are in 1921, that year of Our Lord. In the background hangs Christ on the Cross who died that Love might prevail.

Dilemmas for Mr. Monro.

MR. MONRO has taken the unusual step of sitting *in banc* while his brother poets, one by one, are brought up before him to show cause *Quo Warranto* they broke the close of one Apollo Mousagetes and took therefrom certain shrubs, to wit bays, to the damage of the said Apollo, and against the peace of our Lord the King his crown and dignity. The accused make no defence, and only a remnant escape without severe reprimand. Some receive such drastic treatment that the worst is to be feared. Mr. Noyes was carried out of Court, it is understood, in a state bordering on epilepsy. Mr. Drinkwater vehemently questioned the jurisdiction. Mr. Belloc has bought a charger, which Miss Sitwell undertakes to get filled. Mr. Squire walks about the darker entries with a club. Mr. Chesterton has not been seen in his usual houses of call.

I will not pursue these tropes. They arise inevitably from the digestion of a book called *Some Contemporary Poets*, lately published by Mr. Harold Monro, a book of which the good taste is inconspicuous, seeing that Mr. Monro is himself a poet, and a dealer in his own poetry and in that of all those whom he arraigns. It is a sound convention that dog does not eat dog, even yellow dog. That is not only a gentlemanly standard to have set up: it is also a right business precept. Suppose that a large retail boot-

shop, after some years' trading, were to issue what it would certainly call a booklet, an illustrated booklet, not recommending, but sternly criticizing some of the makes at that moment in its windows; in some cases condemning the exhibits altogether—what would happen? One thing would happen immediately; there would be large withdrawals of stock by the injured makers. Another thing would be visits of customers asking the dealer what the deuce he meant by selling so-and-so's glacé kids when he must have had this belated information concerning their cut and quality up his sleeve all the time. Mutate the *mutanda*, and see what is going to happen to Mr. Monro. I must say that he will deserve it.

Mr. Monro, I imagine, has been brooding upon this clutch of his for many years before he hatched it out. He cannot have read much else than contemporary minor poetry ever since he made the dispensing of it the career of a lifetime. Add what he has talked about it to what he has read of it, and it is not difficult to guess that it has played old Harry with his taste, in every sense of that word. Ginger is no longer hot in the mouth. Rime is a vicious jingle, rhythm the maddening reiteration of some infernal machine. He writes sourly of it all—or nearly all. He likes Miss Mew—and so he ought; I think he likes Mr. Hodgson; he likes Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer very much indeed; and he seems to like Mr. Ezra Pound. But beyond those fortunate ones hardly any prospect pleases. Of course I looked to see whether mine did. I cannot flatter myself—though he has not taken leave to summon me to his bar in so many words. He throws me an *obiter dictum*. He says that I have historical interest. That's all right, of course. There's a Society for the Protection of such

Monuments. I am writing to the Secretary. He doesn't think that Mr. Binyon has any interest at all. Alas, partridge has no interest at all if you have it for breakfast, luncheon, dinner, every day for several years. Naturally. But one eats better meals when one is interested; and one writes better books in the same frame of mind.

I at least shall be interested to see how Mr. Monro escapes impalement on the horns of the dilemma he has set up. A dilemma? There are two of them; so he is severely wedged. The first is what I may call the trader's dilemma. He has spent the better part of ten years perhaps in selling minor poetry. He has read it and had it read publicly, he has published it on his own account, and exposed for sale the very books he handles so severely. He now tells his old customers, and warns his new ones, that much of the 'stuff' is so much spoiled paper and ink. Either, then, it is worth its price, or it is worth what he says of it. What will he do about it? Will he present to purchasers of Mr. Drinkwater, Mr. Noyes, Sir William Watson, and Miss Sitwell a copy of his own book *gratis*? Will he refuse those bards the entry, or shut down the shop? *Je me demande.*

The literary dilemma is more serious for him, but only because it is popularly supposed that men of letters are born with finer taste and a keener sense of humour than traders. The principal section of his book is entitled 'Poets and Poetasters of our Time.' Now, is Mr. Monro, as poet, entitled to call any modern poet a poetaster? Pope did it, and Pope was a poet. Mr. Monro is a poet—but is he a Pope? He blesses and bans as if he were *the* Pope, but that is not the present matter. The dilemma may be stated thus: either Mr. Monro is a Pope and entitled to scourge

dullness, or he is not, and dullness is entitled to scourge Mr. Monro. Let us see what happens.

A light-hearted perusal of his pages has led me into this train of thought; a deeper one might tempt me to follow his ill-considered steps. Whatever I do, I won't take upon myself to condemn my brother-poets, though I will praise whatever I find praiseworthy upon the well-tuned cymbals. But I will be so bold as to advise Mr. Monro, a younger man than I am, when he does this kind of thing again, not to publish a man's worst verses without also publishing his best; and if I might add one more counsel it would be—*not* to do it again.

The Oyster King

WE are all parasites, of course. It is Nature's little plan that every creature should prey on some other creature; but in arranging that Man, alone of them, should prey upon Man she has outdone her usual outdoings. It is impossible, unfortunately, to imagine a more disgusting way of life—but there it is. Nevertheless, if I were to call Mr. Edward Bok, whose notable autobiography[1] suggests these remarks, a parasite of high development he might be offended, even though I were to add that he is no more so than the grocer round the corner, or than me, except in being very much more efficient. However, I will put him rather among the oyster-men. He shall be, for he deserves to be, the Oyster King; for the world has truly been his oyster, and he has extracted from it not only nourishment, but pearls of the rarest size and lustre. He has edited the greatest magazine on earth; and it is his, for he made it. That is *The Ladies' Home Journal* of Philadelphia, which at the time of his retirement had a monthly circulation of a million and three quarters. Match me this marvel from a Western clime. Tell me of a greater magazine than that.

I have never seen a copy of it, but Mr. Bok enables me to conceive it by the detailed account he gives of its development at his hands. Its departments—'Side Talks with Girls', by Ruth Ashmore (who was Mr. Bok himself

[1] *Edward Bok; An Autobiography*, Butterworth, 1921.

until the correspondence bowled him over); 'Heart to Heart Talks', which was Mrs. Margaret Bottome's affair; its series—'Unknown Wives of well-known Men', leading off with Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher; 'Clever Daughters of Clever Men', with Charles Dickens's daughter up; then 'an entire number of his magazine written by Famous Daughters of Famous Men'; then 'This Country of Ours', by the President of the United States; and 'Inside one Hundred Homes', containing photographs of the drawing-rooms, dining-rooms, and possibly bedrooms of private citizens—these are the kind of irritants which stimulated Mr. Bok's oysters to the production of pearls. It is not at all hard to understand that Lord Northcliffe in an Introduction to this work considers it 'a tale of romantic adventure; the kind of adventure which I must be pardoned for feeling, myself, to be the most romantic of all.' To Lord Northcliffe, himself considerably an oyster-man, the advance of the *Ladies' Home Journal* must be a dream of Heaven upon earth. Interest in the man must have been swallowed up in admiration of his triumph. For me, other questions press for answer, some of which Mr. Bok satisfies, but not all.

Although he is not American by birth, Nature seems to have qualified him to become one at short notice. He left his native country at six years old, when his parents settled themselves in Brooklyn. Before he was thirteen we find him thus engaged:

> 'One evening Edward went to a party of young people, and his latent journalistic sense whispered to him that his young hostess might like to see her social affair in print. He went home, wrote up the party, being careful to include the name of every boy and girl present, and

next morning took the account to the city editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, with the sage observation that every name mentioned in that paragraph represented a buyer of the paper, who would like to see his or her name in print, and that if the editor had enough of these reports he might very advantageously strengthen the circulation of *The Eagle*. The editor was not slow to see the point, and offered Edward three dollars a column for such reports. On his way home, Edward calculated how many parties he would have to attend a week to furnish a column, and decided that he would organize a corps of private reporters himself. Forthwith, he saw every boy and girl he knew, got each to promise to write for him an account of each party he or she attended or gave, and laid great stress on a full recital of names. Within a few weeks Edward was turning in to *The Eagle* from two to three columns a week; his pay was raised to four dollars a column; the editor was pleased in having started a department that no other paper carried, and the 'among those present' at the parties all bought the paper and were immensely gratified to see their names.'

There you are. That is how you stimulate the oyster. The child was father to the man. What Mr. Bok did before he reached his teens was what he has been doing ever since.

At thirteen he began the exploitation of the Eminent; that is, he began to sort out among the oysters those of the largest size. Reading biography in Appleton's Encyclopaedia,

'One day it occurred to him to test the accuracy of the biographies he was reading. James A. Garfield was then spoken of for the Presidency; Edward wondered whether it was true that the man who was likely to be President of the United States had once been a boy on

the tow-path, and, with a simple directness characteristic of his Dutch training, wrote to General Garfield, asking whether the boyhood episode was true, and explaining why he asked. Of course any public man, no matter how large his correspondence, is pleased to receive an earnest letter from an information-seeking boy. General Garfield answered warmly and fully. Edward showed the letter to his father, who told the boy that it was valuable and he should keep it. This was a new idea. . . . if one such letter was valuable, how much more valuable would be a hundred. If General Garfield answered him, would not other famous men? Why not begin a collection of autograph letters?'

He did. He studied 'the lives of successful men and women'; then 'with boyish frankness' he baited his hooks, with leading questions I know not how artfully concealed, or if concealed at all—anyhow with abundant success.

'General Grant sketched on an improvised map the exact spot where General Lee surrendered to him; Longfellow told him how he came to write 'Excelsior'; Whittier told the story of 'The Barefoot Boy'; Tennyson wrote out a stanza or two of 'The Brook'—and so on. From collection to publication was not far, as may be imagined. The 'boyish frankness' of this enterprise is not the feature which strikes me most forcibly.

Interviewing followed as a matter of course. The demon child took that in his stride.

'He began to note each day in the newspapers the 'distinguished arrivals' at the New York hotels; and when any one with whom he corresponded arrived, Edward would, after business hours, go up-town, pay

his respects, and thank him in person for his letters. No person was too high for Edward's boyish approach.' No person could be. His biggest day was when he dined with General Grant, sat by the bedside of Mrs. Lincoln, and wound up the evening with Jefferson Davis, who promised him a letter written by each member of the Confederate Cabinet. There must be something in the air of America which makes this kind of thing possible—possible to do, and possible to be endured. Obviously; since Mr. Bok still lives to tell the tale.

His next exploit is an attack upon the oyster from a different side. An actress's portrait is thrown out of a packet of cigarettes. He picks it up, looks at it, turns it over, and discovers the reverse to be blank. Happy thought: fill in the blank with biographical matter. He explains his little idea to the publisher of the picture. Upshot, ten dollars apiece for hundred-word biographies of one hundred famous Americans. He starts in, finishes his hundred; another is called for, yet another. Mr. Bok deputized. His brother was put on, at five dollars per life; then 'one or two journalists he knew'. He was 'speedily convinced that merely to edit biographies written by others, at one half the price paid to him was more profitable than to write himself.' Sure thing. 'It was commercial, if you will', he says. It was commercial whether we will or not. 'The important point,' he thinks, 'is that Edward Bok was being led more and more to writing and editorship.' To my mind that is not the important point. That rather lies in the distinction which exists between self-help and helping yourself.

He helped himself presently to New England and her great men—to Wendell Holmes, Longfellow, Miss

Alcott, Emerson, Phillips Brooks. All of them were astoundingly benevolent. The philosopher-poet was failing, and the chapter concerning him is painful to read: but Mr. Bok got his autograph all right, and wrote out all his interviews. Irritation of the kind, and even more of it, produced pearls of price from his oysters. It was in 1884 (when he began to edit *The Brooklyn Magazine*) that, as he says, 'Edward's autographic acquaintances stood him in good stead.' It was so simple.

> 'He went in turn to each noted person he had met, explained his plight, and stated his ambitions, with the result that very soon the magazine and the public were surprised at the distinction of the contributors to *The Brooklyn Magazine*. . . . Editors wondered how the publishers could afford it, whereas, in fact, not a single name represented an honorarium. Each contributor had come gratuitously to the aid of the editor.'

The young cuckoo dumped into some small bird's nest thrives upon the same plan. He opens a cavernous beak and fills the garden with raucous cries. Every bird in the place hastens to fill him if by any means to procure a cessation. But the young cuckoo continues to shriek, and the birds to supply nourishment. In America they have no young cuckoos; but they have young editors.

I must pass over his most candid account of how he helped himself to Jay Gould, since that was only an episode in the career which Lord Northcliffe finds so romantic, and pause rather at his newspaper syndicate founded when he was still short of one-and-twenty. This was a field—or shall I say a bed?—comparatively unworked until 'the young syndicator' as he calls himself, took off his coat. The Rev. Henry Ward Beecher was

the first oyster to be laid down; his next was the writer of a 'bright letter' called 'Bab's Babble'; and his next Miss Ella Wheeler Wilcox. The result of all that was a 'Bok Page' in a hundred newspapers; a 'Bok's Literary Leaves'; and in due course, no doubt (though it is not mentioned), Bok's Hebdomadary Picnics. And so far Mr. Bok was not twenty-one. A live wire.

I will not follow into the account of his riper years. Comment fails me already, if comment be necessary; but I don't think it can be. Mr. Bok relates his rebuffs with the same engaging candour that he shows over his successes. Some of them, such as the stony front turned him by 'Lewis Carroll', would have abashed an ordinary oyster-man. But Mr. Bok did not understand it, simply.

It is a sobering thought that any one of the autograph hunters now up in America may be the Bok of the future. It may well be so, but there is no escape. Shades of the prison house begin to close—but not upon the growing Bok.

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